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A DIGRESSION

THE STORY OF A SHIP'S COMPANY

By G. F.

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VICTORIA, B.C.

Edward H. Livesay

Victoria, B.C.
Mar. 1919

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A Naval Digression

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The Story of a Ship's Company

BY

G. F.

William Briggs
Toronto
William Blackwood and Sons
Edinburgh and London
1916

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INTRODUCTION.

Ab ovo, let it be understood that the following pages do not contain a *history* of the War from the naval point of view. The incidents recorded are all authentic in that they occurred, but, except with regard to the accounts of actual fighting (which is described as fully as the censorship allows), the various chapters contain merely a record of "impressions" of life in a battle cruiser during the opening months of the War. Purposely no attempt has been made to modify these impressions in the light of after events.

The characters are entirely imaginary, and it is hoped that little idiosyncracies of shipmates at the time may not have duly influenced the hand that wielded the pen. With the memory of the great victory of May 31st still fresh in our minds, it is wellnigh heart-breaking to think

that, except for the few who—like myself—had been appointed elsewhere before that glorious day, practically all these shipmates have given up their lives in the Great Adventure.

"It would have warmed your heart," wrote the Vice-Admiral Commanding the Battle Cruiser Fleet in a letter which has appeared in the Press, "to see the gallant Hood leading his division into action with the most inspiring courage": and gallant Hood was on the bridge of OUR ship; it was OUR ship's company who manned his flagship.

Salute to the heroes!

G. F.

JULY 1916.

CONTENTS.

PART I. THE NORTH SEA.

CHAP.		PAGE
I.	THE HIVE AND THE SPIRIT OF THE HIVE	1
II.	FITTING OUT	5
III.	"SHAKING DOWN"	9
IV.	A BRUSH WITH THE ENEMY	14
V.	OUR DAILY COURSE	24
VI.	A LAND BREEZE	36
VII.	". . . THE KING'S HIGHWAY"	47
VIII.	PRESENTS	60
IX.	GALES	68
X.	CALM	77
XI.	CELEBRITIES	85
XII.	MISCELLANEA	97
XIII.	"OFFICIAL CORRESPONDENCE, RULES AND REGULATIONS FOR"	109
XIV.	RETROSPECTIVE	116
XV.	JUNKET AND CREAM	125

PART II. THE SOUTH ATLANTIC.

I. IT'S A LONG WAY TO 145
II. OUR NEW LIFE 154
III. LAT. 0°, LONG. 31° W. 171
IV. 'NEATH THE SOUTHERN CROSS . . . 181
V. THE BATTLE OF THE FALKLANDS . . . 187
VI. "MALVINAS" 208
VII. ROLLING HOME 214

PART III. THE NORTH SEA.

I. "CARRYING ON" 233
II. "THOSE PEOPLE" 238
III. A FAREWELL *STRAFE* 242
EPILOGUE 246

A Naval Digression.

Part I. The North Sea.

CHAPTER I.

THE HIVE AND THE SPIRIT OF THE HIVE.

About nine hundred of us there are, fallen in under the White Ensign, which floats, shimmering in the summer sunlight, from the flagstaff of the Royal Naval Barracks—a motley crowd, seamen, stokers, engine-room artificers, artisans, sick-bay men, stewards, &c.; just—one ship's company.

And the date is Sunday, August 2, 1914.

Things have moved with a whirl the last few days, and for no one more so than for the officer in charge, Lieutenant Roy Langton. A brief forty-eight hours ago he was at Osborne, bidding good-bye to the cadets of his term just setting off on their summer leave, and now here he is, on

the sun-baked parade-ground, waiting for orders to march the men lined up before him to their—and his—ship, all in response to a one-word official telegram, "Mobilise."

"Pick up your bags and hammocks!——By the right, quick march!"

With shuffling tread the long procession gets under way. Precise marching is rather out of the question when one's left arm encircles what the rate book describes as "hammock, seaman's, 1 No.," and over one's right shoulder is balanced the huge cylindrical bag which has to contain all the average "matloe's" belongings. No, not quite all, for to the head of each bag is lashed, by rope or spun-yarn, according to the individual's appraisement of its intrinsic value, a well-scrubbed ditty box, unfitting but only possible home for his scanty *Lares et Penates.*

Across the barrack square we march, through the massive gates, round which is clustered a small and ever-changing crowd—mothers, sisters, wives, sweethearts; along the public road for a few hundred yards, then through the dockyard gates, to be lost for so very very long from the wistful eyes, some tear-dimmed, of those who have been watching us.

On we go, round docks and basins, now shuffling more laboriously than ever over a thickly-cobbled old-world road, which, with the tarry

smell wafted out from the frowning, begrimed storehouses alongside, brings to us a breath of bygone times and bygone seamen—now picking up the step again as we come across a stretch of modern macadam—halted here and there to let pass a puffing, panting dockyard train, whose every truck is filled brim-high with stores for vessels which, like ours, are being hurriedly commissioned for WAR.

At last the ship looms up, towering grey, silent and majestic, at the basin side—OUR ship. In the ordinary course of events she would not have been commissioned for some time yet, but many prearranged plans and programmes are going by the board just now. The leading file arrives abreast the sloping gangway. "Ship's company" (already we are a family), "Mark time!——Halt!"

On the poop stands a figure surmounted by a "brass hat"—the Commander. Does he realise that every one of those men on the jetty is forming a swift mental opinion about him? If he does, his face betrays not one whit of embarrassment. For a space his eye runs over us, and it is easy to imagine his thoughts and hopes—then, with an almost imperceptible jerk, he brings himself back to the realities of affairs.

"Have all the men got their commissioning-cards, Master-at-Arms? Yes? Then march them inboard, Mr Langton."

The oracle has spoken.

And with that steady procession up the gangway comes the sudden transformation of a lifeless, sullen mass of steel, guns, and intricate machinery into the hearth and home of wellnigh one thousand souls—nine hundred of us, and a detachment of "Jollies" from the Royal Marine Headquarters. The inanimate ship all in a moment becomes the animate "she," for once commissioned a vessel almost takes on herself the personality of those who man her.

It needs but little imagination to liken the scene to that at the hive when a virgin swarm is brought to the entrance and invited to enter. As the bees, clustered ready on the alighting board, shaking off lethargy at the portent of a great work, one by one in a seemingly endless, though ordered, procession enter their home, so do the men in one long stream take possession of theirs. And the "queen," about whom all interest and work centres in the bee world, is present too in this human hive of ours, even if it be only in the spirit. "Esprit de corps" we might term her in peace time; what she is in war needs no explanation.

Aye, Maeterlinck himself would have agreed that there was nought amiss with the spirit of our hive.

CHAPTER II.

FITTING OUT.

THERE is just one point, though, where the simile breaks down, utterly and irretrievably: no one would ever put a swarm of bees into an unfinished hive, for even should the "workers" stand it, the drones would certainly strongly object to a continual fiendish hammer, hammer, hammer on the walls of their home. Perhaps the fact that we are all workers (though one or two drones appeared later on!) made it possible for us to live through our first fortnight on board, and still to-day—the day on which we are pronounced ready for sea—be sane.

For nerve-racking is about the only description to give to those fourteen days that seem all the more awful now that comparative peace and quietness, cleanliness and orderliness, hold sway, —now that things seem to be running in a well-oiled grove.

Everything, when we arrived, seemed just incomplete, just not ready. A horde of dockyard men were working on board day and night, and every second was made hideous with the clang of hammer on rivet, the vibrant din of the pneumatic driller, the thousand and one odd noises that are inseparably associated with shipbuilding and refitting. Nothing seemed to go quite right. If the electric light failed once it failed a hundred times, and then for a brief space a glorious quietness (treason, this!) would reign in the locality affected till the "short" was found or the "earth" detected.

And in this turmoil we had to eat, sleep, and have our being. The eating went off all right, the work went on swimmingly, and we were much too busy to worry about how we "had our being" till it came to sleeping; and that at first was a wee bit difficult.

It was all rather trying, and doubtless when Angus Morrison, Seaman, Royal Naval Reserve—late first hand of a Stornoway trawler—was kept awake practically the whole of his scanty sleeping hours by a demon working with hammer, drill, and brace on the bulkhead within a foot of his hammock, his sentiments on things in general were very similar to those of Assistant-Paymaster Saxon, who, after wrestling all day and burning

the midnight oil (220 volt!) over the ship's books and accounts, would manage perhaps to snatch a troubled hour's sleep, what time an identical demon carried out identical work on the steel wall of his cabin. Perhaps Morrison might be able to express himself a little more forcibly,—probably he did.

But demons always are very thick-skinned; the situation does not appeal to them in the same light when they have the day in which to sleep.

But we none of us really groused; at least, not very much. When Lieutenant Sandall ("Torps," from being a torpedo specialist and consequently in charge of the torpedo and electrical department of the ship), after being summoned into the presence of the powers that be for the *n*th time in one day, announced to all and sundry of his fellow-officers that he was "jolly well fed up with the whole blooming show," he did not mean it. It was merely a *façon de parler*. Just in the same way, when Private Spooner, Royal Marine Light Infantry — Cockney, bad-hat, and King's hard bargain — confided to his bosom pal, Gunner Murphy, Royal Marine Artillery (same attributes, substituting Irishman for Cockney), that he was "—— well going to chuck his —— hand in," his remark, though forcible enough in all con-

science, was not sincere. He, too, did not mean it.

Both Private Spooner and Gunner Murphy doubtless would have bartered their very souls for a pint or two of what they familiarly termed "hops" (it was the failing of both their lives that they never knew just when to stop imbibing, and so, to avoid that awful possibility of giving up too early, they invariably kept on too late); yet they were two of the best workers in the ship.

But now our "moving in" troubles are over, and to-day, as at sea we easily touch, and pass, the contract full speed, we feel supremely satisfied with the thought that a very short space of time will find us in the battle line, ready for anything. Sundry trials of guns and machinery have to take place, and then—away to join our myriad consorts.

Another link will have been added to that sure shield of Britain's defence.

CHAPTER III.

"SHAKING DOWN."

YESTERDAY we did our first coaling.

We are now seven days out of dockyard hands, have been in commission three whole weeks, and though as yet we have not joined up with the Fleet, we have nosed our way to one of the northern bases, and, incidentally, have played our first game of mine-dodging in the "German Ocean."

A fine butt for sarcasm those two words. Why English map-printers should continue to give the North Sea the alternative title, goodness only knows. Private Spooner quickly summed up the situation on "make and mend" afternoon as he laboriously studied a well-thumbed atlas in the marines' mess. "German —— Ocean: I don't fink!"

But Private Spooner, as has already been shown, is apt to be unduly expressive.

Yes, we have quite "shaken down." "Guns" no longer deems it absolutely necessary for us to go to general quarters *all* day long; even the Commander is inclined to think that if a lighted match were allowed to work its will in, say, the sail-room for a whole minute, the fire party might *possibly* be able to successfully deal with the resultant outbreak. The Captain seems more or less convinced that the torpedoes *perhaps* may run at the critical moment. And when the powers that be will admit even that much to their juniors, there is but one verdict to pronounce—we are in tiptop fighting trim.

Of the multitudinous drills, evolutions, and duties that we have been carrying out for the last week (and shall carry out—*ad infinitum*), there is only one job that really does put one's back up — coaling. At the perpetual watch-keeping — on the bridge, at the guns, as submarine look-out, down below feeding the ever-hungry furnaces, in the wireless room, coding, *anywhere*—no one grumbles, but already we can see that coaling will become a very sore point. After a strenuous time at sea, to be welcomed at your anchorage by a dirty black collier that seems aggressively eager to present you, "free, gratis, and for nothing" (except as regards the work part of the question), with a thousand

or more (generally more!) tons of coals is, to say the very least, distinctly depressing.

But still it is all in the day's work, and even coaling has its lighter side. As witness Able Seaman Dodds yesterday, who, after tipping his barrow-load down one shoot, only missed falling down another one by the skin of his teeth. "Streuth," he ejaculated, striking a serio-comic attitude, and making certain at the same time that a half-smoked woodbine was still in position behind his left ear, "nearly down the gloomy chasm" (ch as in church).

Now, to-day, we are having a certain amount of relaxation, as, beside the fact of our being in harbour, it is Sunday, and the Chaplain gets his first opportunity for anything more than a hasty stand-up service. "Real Church" is being held on the mess-deck, and up the open hatchway is wafted the swell of voices—

"Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty!

. . . . . .

. . . . . .

. . . . . ."

The Padre is a brave man, for bitter experience has taught most naval chaplains that it is advisable to put a ban on Hymn No. 160. Although the British Blue is by no means irreverent (many "shore-going parsons," could they but

have a glimpse of the Navy, would sigh for such attentive congregations), there is one temptation that he simply cannot conquer, and from a certain number of throats will almost invariably come an awful perversion, "Coaling, Coaling, Coaling!"

But perhaps the Rev. Charles Golightly, M.A.—cricket blue, rugger international, and, above all, jolly good fellow—has realised that war is working some subtle changes in the minds of the six hundred or so men before him. Anyway, his experiment is plainly justified, for clear and strong each verse of the four starts off, "Holy, Holy, Holy!"

The service proceeds; comes another hymn—

> "The trivial round, the common task,
> Will furnish all we need to ask,
> . . . . . .
> . . . . . ."

"A bloomin' sight more than ever I'd ask for." Stoker Peter Gibbons, passing on tiptoe through the flat above, did not mean to be profane; he does not even realise that his remark was profane, but (and here is the flaw) he would never have made it had the service down below been one of his own.

"R.C." is stamped on Stoker Gibbons' identity disc.

"Church" is almost over. From the hatchway one can hear "Hymn No. 595," and then from voices in unison—

"Holy Father, in Thy mercy
Hear our anxious prayer,

. . . . .
. . . . ."

* * * *

"Bless them, guide them, save them, keep them
Near to Thee. Amen."

* * * *

A charming simplicity is the keynote of our services — the good old-fashioned chants, well-known hymns, and a ten-minute heart to heart talk for the sermon. The surroundings—just a part of the marines' and stokers' mess-deck—do not lend themselves to anything elaborate. But nothing is lost in impressiveness because of that.

Up the ladder steps the Chaplain, books under his arm. Down below the Commander gives an almost imperceptible nod to a figure that has magically appeared at his side. Comes a shrill pipe, then a hoarse bawl, "Stokers unrig church, boys return books."

God's House, for another week at least, is no more.

CHAPTER IV.

A BRUSH WITH THE ENEMY.

SEALED orders! Magical words those; words which, in a story, never fail to thrill, be one old or young, staid or excitable; words which bring to any undertaking a breath of Romance (with a capital R).

And yesterday morning we put to sea—with sealed orders. Now, as a glorious August sunset gradually fades from the sky ahead of us, we are making our way "home" with a share in the Heligoland victory to our credit.

Obviously we had come out for blood. The course we steered, once clear of land, alone was enough to make our hopes run high. We knew, too, that various other squadrons and destroyer flotillas were preceding us, steering an identical course.

In the Ward-room last night everything was absolutely settled by the "school of strategy"

that has sprung up. "I take it," Langton had said, "that the destroyers will make right into the Bight, having the light cruisers as supports in the background. We ourselves" (and here he meant the squadron of which we were just one unit) "will remain still farther behind, ready to dash in should anything big come out."

As things went, he was not far wrong.

A perfect dawn ushered in Friday, August 28; altogether we had an ideal setting for our drama, but when the curtain should rise rather depended on brother Boche.

And at about seven o'clock, so persistent had "the gods"—in the shape of our destroyers—become, that it went up with a bang, and twenty minutes later the action proper started.

So here let us recount something of what was happening, though actually at the time we ourselves knew none of the details. All the information at hand was gleaned from a wireless, intercepted soon after eight, saying that the flotillas were engaging the enemy.

In reality what transpired was this: A division of destroyers first sighted the enemy at 6.53 A.M. They gave chase, and soon the whole of that flotilla, with their leader, the *Arethusa*, were in the thick of it.

Then on the latter's port bow up loomed two hostile cruisers—rather heavy odds. For eighteen minutes she had a very hot time of it, giving, though, as good as she received, when the *Fearless* arrived on the scene and relieved pressure somewhat.

Ten minutes passed, and the *Arethusa's* opponent — much damaged — made off in the direction of Heligoland, which was sighted just then, and our ships had perforce to withdraw to the westward to get out of range of the German stronghold.

And in that short half-hour the *Arethusa*, living up to the example of her illustrious forebears, inscribed her name on the roll of fame.

But crippled though she was, there was further work for her yet, for, just before eleven, a large enemy cruiser came up and opened a heavy and rapid fire at her; again her fairy godmother, the *Fearless*, came to the rescue, and, the destroyers also attacking with torpedoes, the German deemed it advisable to retire. Which she did, and disappeared in the mist that had suddenly risen.

For a short time only, though, as very soon after she loomed up again and the engagement was resumed.

At this stage the light cruisers were ordered in to give support.

Meanwhile we, with our four consorts, had remained in the background.

The time passed slowly, and though every one was itching to know exactly what was happening, all we could do was to possess our souls in patience. At a quarter to eight the action bugle had sounded and we dashed to our fighting stations, hoping that the next half-hour or so would see us in the thick of the "real thing."

But in that we were doomed to disappointment. It was only a routine practice; the stage manager was merely making a final survey of his properties.

Round and round we went in circles, a feather of steam from the quivering safety-valves showing that nothing more than the order would be needful for us to be off at full speed and into the fray. The waiting was maddening; came nine o'clock —ten—eleven,—and six bells had just struck when we got our first thrill. Suddenly, and most unexpectedly to the group of officers on deck, the 4" guns on the superstructure opened fire, and the Padre, who was standing close by and nearly underneath one, lost his hat (quite), his hearing (almost), and altogether had the shock of his life. Submarines had appeared, but all their attacks were frustrated, though we ourselves

had one anxious moment when a torpedo passed under our stern, so very very close.

Then off we started, as things were getting warm in the Bight.

While we were making at full speed to the scene of operations, the affair progressed considerably. The *Arethusa* and *Fearless* gave their foe a bad battering, and again forced her to seek the refuge of Heligoland.

Then the German *Mainz* appeared and came in for a very warm reception. For twenty-five minutes she fought before she fell into the hands of our reinforcing light cruisers, who quickly reduced her to a ghastly condition.

It was just after noon that action was sounded on board us—the first time that a lot of us had ever heard the stirring call blown in earnest. Ten minutes later from on deck could be seen the *Fearless* and her flotilla returning to the westward and the light cruisers engaging the *Mainz* with deadly effect.

Sounds of firing came to us from the north-east, and fifteen minutes later the lamed *Arethusa* and the third flotilla were sighted engaging the *Koln*. Soon, ahead, the leading battle cruisers opened fire in succession, and shortly after we ourselves commenced.

The enemy tried to break away; evidently she hoped to escape in the mist, which was fast making the range of visibility very small.

We took up the chase, dealing with the German *Ariadne* in our stride (she was left burning furiously, and in a sinking condition), and at 1.25 P.M. again opened fire on the *Koln*. In ten minutes she was no more, and for the poor wretches on board those ten minutes must have been awful, as our squadron's big guns literally raked her fore and aft; 'twas little wonder that she so quickly caught fire, turned over and sank. Destroyers were sent on an errand of mercy, but not a single survivor could be seen.

At 1.40 P.M. we turned and retired, and when we eventually dispersed from our stations, though years seemed to have passed, it was but two o'clock.

So ended the battle of Heligoland. Not a very big affair as far as we ourselves are concerned, and all the honour for the decisive victory is due to our small brothers, the light cruisers, flotilla leaders, and destroyers.

But as a ship we can consider ourselves very lucky; twelve days out of dockyard hands, and here we are, blooded.

II.

"Submarines!" Again the one word signal runs down the line like lightning. The retirement evidently is not to be carried out without a parting effort by the enemy, and it is a rotten feeling to know that any minute you may be blown sky-high without having seen your antagonist. At least it is to some people.

Surgeon Dannatt, however, treats the affair in airy fashion. True, his nonchalance may be a pose; if it is, it's very successfully done.

"Come on, Saxon," he says, "up on deck, and if there's a chance, mind you get a photo." (Saxon and he own a joint "war camera.") Or perhaps it is the commercial instinct coming out (the papers are offering large sums for photos), and of course we are a nation of shopkeepers, are we not?

But this second attack, like the first, is unsuccessful.

We have plenty to talk about now, and at present it is rather hard to accurately decide what has happened. A careful review, however, reveals the fact that three enemy protected cruisers have been sunk and also one destroyer; while it is certain that very considerable damage has been done to several other small craft.

On our side we have sustained no vital injury. The big ships and the light cruisers are unharmed; the *Arethusa* is temporarily crippled, and a few destroyers are slightly damaged.

But of those gallant gentlemen—both officers and men—who went into battle so eagerly this morning, some, alas, are no more. . .

"Well, that's all over," observed Lieutenant-Commander Martin to Langton. "How did your turret go?"

"All can do; not a hitch anywhere. What about yours?" rejoins Langton.

"Absolutely splendid. I only wish we had been up against something more our own size. What I cannot understand is why some of their big ships did not come out."

"Nor can I; but 'discretion, &c.,' apparently is the Huns' motto." Then, turning towards Sandall who had just joined the little group assembled in the favourite debating place—round the empty stove: "Well, what do you think of it? No chance for a 'mouldy,' I suppose." (Sandall's specialities — torpedoes — sport the pet name of "mouldies.")

"No. But wasn't the whole show top-hole?"

"Yes, though rather devilish," says Martin.

And unconsciously he voiced the opinion of most of us. In a way it is a rotten job, sea-fighting; modern invention has made it such a very cold-blooded affair.

There is little more to relate, though perhaps one further incident of the day deserves passing mention, for over it hangs a halo of true romance.

Suddenly two submarines popped up close by, but they caused neither excitement nor consternation, for those on the look-out rather expected, and were watching for them. They were our own, and one of them calmly semaphored that she had nine men belonging to the *Defender*, and three German prisoners on board.

The explanation is thus: During the fight the *Defender* lowered boats to pick up survivors from one of the German ships, and while this was going on an enemy cruiser arrived on the scene and opened fire. The *Defender* had to flee at top speed.

The submarine's skipper had seen all this through his periscope. He dived to attack the cruiser, but she made off before he could get within range; so he returned to the abandoned boats, to find that they had picked up two German officers and twenty-four men, eighteen of whom were wounded.

A pretty problem: What to do with twenty-six Huns as well as the nine destroyer's men?

He solved it as best he could by taking on board the submarine our own people and one German officer and two men—all he had room for. The remaining Germans he left in the boats, gave them water and biscuits, told them the course for Heligoland, and departed.

Whether they arrived, we know not; if they did, probably the enemy exhibited the boats as evidence that they had sunk at least one of our destroyers.

We take the three prisoners on board and set off again. To-morrow we should arrive in harbour.

CHAPTER V.

OUR DAILY COURSE.

We have been at sea for nearly six weeks. September is fast waning, and already we are absolutely inured to—though, it must be confessed, somewhat bored with—the rather monotonous routine. Days in harbour are few and far between, and nearly every minute of such days, when they do come along, is occupied by that abomination—coaling. Well may the "all-oil" ships keep a brightly burnished shovel, "suitably inscribed" (the inscription is "Lest we forget!"), in a prominent position, so that their ships' companies may gaze thereon with reverence and —thank their lucky stars!

But even coaling is somewhat alleviated by the fact that mails are inseparably connected with it, for (Admiralty and G.P.O. *volentibus*) where we coal there we should get a mail; and, let us bestow a passing word of praise, we generally do.

But as time goes by and, from no timidity on our part the dear old British Public may rest assured, the only entry, save generalities, that we can put in our diaries is "nothing doing," so does the awful feeling that "der Tag" is becoming more remote rather than nearer gain ground.

Regarding the day's work. Long before dawn the "housemaids" are out and about, scrubbing decks, washing down, and generally cleaning up. We (the Watch Below) soon follow *en masse*, lash up our hammocks, grouse, think of breakfast, wait for it, and in half an hour's time get it. Of course, the morning-watch men are, and since four have been, on the bridge, at the guns, in the tops, &c., there to remain till their reliefs of the forenoon take on, when for a space they will become the Watch Below. And so it goes on throughout the day and night—*ad infinitum*.

Every forenoon we go to action stations, and the rest of the time is occupied with "cleaning quarters," where the guns are given a "wash and brush up," divisions, prayers, and various drills and exercises. The afternoons pass in much the same way. After evening quarters, when we are mustered and inspected by the officers of our divisions, the band strikes up (how we wish the bandmaster had more music than "A Life on the Ocean Wave," "Charley Brown," and "The

Robert E. Lee" in the small card form), and for a quarter of an hour or so all hands can be seen doubling round the deck for exercise, this to be followed, perhaps, by a few minutes "Swedish."

Then till supper-time, except for various odd jobs here and there, such as "darken ship" soon after sunset, those off watch have the time free to themselves—to write letters, wash their clothes, read, or amuse themselves in whatever way they fancy.

Later on come the Executive Officer's rounds, and by ten a silence, punctuated at times with a snore, has settled over the ship—a silence broken only just before midnight and 4 A.M. by the pipe of the boatswain's mate, "Watch close up."

And once a week, if circumstances permit, we get a "make and mend," which, being interpreted, means one afternoon off wherein we may make our clothes, mend them, wash them, read, write, or sleep. The majority of us do the last named, and every bluejacket in some mysterious way readily acquires the faculty to sleep in extraordinary places—Blondin-like on a narrow mess-stool, on tables, on deck, in a gangway where an endless stream of people is passing, amid deafening noises, *anywhere*. And (here is a tip for the medical faculty) if you see a "matloe" sleeping with his boots on, or a marine doing the same

with his off, beware. They must both be ill, for unwritten law decrees otherwise.

So much for the trivial round. Written down in black and white it probably appears rather more monotonous than it really is, for there are alleviations.

Besides the ever-present hope of meeting the enemy—*i.e.*, the visible enemy—proceedings are enlivened occasionally by a submarine "stunt," a mine "chasse," or by boarding merchant ships. Perhaps as regards the last named it were more proper to say "have been," for with ships like ourselves it is no more.

Stroll into the ward-room during the dog-watches. There we shall find the officers not on duty—some reading, some writing letters, others playing one of the numerous games that friends, relations, and a beneficent public have presented.

Observe the "Popping into Potsdam" hero; his score to date is 81 (not out, in that the puzzle is still, even after hard usage by most members of the mess, unbroken, and so long as it remains so his score will increase). To the uninitiated it may be mentioned that "Popping into Potsdam" is merely a modernised version of "Pigs in Clover."

At the end of the table is the "Subway Puzzle" king; his record is 32 times in and 31 times out at one effort.

We are all heroes in our own special line!

Br-r-r-r-r-r-r-r. . . . The alarm rattlers are stuttering out their warning that has but one meaning—submarines! Up dash the executive officers to their stations, and in the mess there are left but the Fleet Surgeon, Fleet Paymaster, and Chaplain.

"After you with that paper, P.M.O.," says the Padre, managing to fit in the sentence between two rounds from a 4-inch gun overhead.

"I hope they sink the swab," is the only remark Pay makes as he calmly puffs at his pipe.

Dum vivimus, vivamus.

Mines are rather different. They form a slight diversion, it is true, but there is not much scope for excitement with mines.

It is only of the surface variety that we can speak: submerged ones we have not yet met (touch wood!), and if we do, well, up we go. And there, for us, will probably be the end of all things. But when an odd one is met gaily floating on the surface, we get as much amusement out of it as possible: First come the

marines with rifles; if they fail to explode it, the maxim tries its hand; should "doddering dick's" efforts be abortive, one 4-inch proj. generally does the trick.

Then comes a loud explosion, an imitation waterspout—and the fun is over.

There remains the diversion of "boarding." And that now, for big ships at least, is finished—killed by the submarine menace. But while it lasted "boarding" was a great event of the day.

Boom! A white cloud of smoke drifts away from the muzzle of one of the foremost Q.F. guns; "Away sea-boat's crew, man the port boat," from the boatswain's mate, and there on the port bow can be seen the ship we have so peremptorily summoned to stop.

On the stage the representation of such a scene would probably be a pleasing item in a naval play. To Assistant-Paymaster Saxon, one of the two boarding officers, it invariably presented itself in a very different light.

SCENE.—*A cabin, plunged in darkness. Outside a blue-jacket messenger has been knocking for some time with no result; in desperation he steps inside and switches on the light, which reveals* Mr Saxon *asleep in his bunk.*

Messenger (*shaking him*). We shall be boarding a ship in a quarter of an hour's time, sir.

Saxon. Um?

(*Messenger repeats.*)

Saxon (*very sleepily*). O'right. What's the time?

Messenger. Half-past five, sir.

Saxon. What's the weather like?

Messenger. Fine, sir, but pretty rough.

The only difference between this little tragedy and a similar one on shore is that Saxon, with a faculty that all naval men seem to develop, by now is wide awake. It is the work of a few minutes only for him to dress, which consists of putting on all his clothes over the top of his pyjamas, donning sea-boots, and wrapping a blue muffler—a fair cousin's gift—round his neck; by the time the last member of the sea-boat's crew has manned the boat he himself is climbing the jumping-ladder up to her.

Everything is as it should be. Etiquette decrees that as regards preliminaries it is the right of the senior officer to arrive on the scene of action last, and, unwittingly, Saxon has conformed to custom, for as yet his fellow-boarder (Lieutenant-Commander Martin—a "two-and-a-half-stripe" officer, while Saxon, in the relative rank, wears but two) has not arrived.

In another half minute Martin is in the boat.

"Tried the pin?" he asks the coxswain.

"Yes, sir."

"Right. Keep hold of the life-lines, every one."

Down below them—a long way it seems—a boiling sea is running. There is not an actual gale, but enough wind to make that nasty short breaking sea for which these regions are famous.

"It will be a dirty trip, if they send us," Martin remarks to his *confrère*.

"Pas demi," comes the reply.

For twenty minutes they remain at the davit-heads. In the early morning light the suspect ship—a black tramp, stopped and wallowing in the trough of the sea—looms nearer and nearer, is abreast of us, and, without our stopping, drops astern.

"Fall out, the sea-boat's crew," is the order from the bridge; apparently the powers that be have decided that it is too rough for boatwork.

Then, of course, there is one more "stunt" which deserves mention—the daily performance at the spotting table.

The preliminaries for this consist of fixing up at one end of a large flat the instrument which provides the name for the entertainment, which —— (sh-h-h ——, it's a secret); rigging up as many flexible voice-pipes as possible in the space

available; providing stools and tables on which are displayed divers abstruse instruments.

The minor essentials comprise stop-watches, forms—on which to inscribe the progress of affairs, — binoculars, and, in the individual, patience.

Enter the *dramatis personæ*. They take up their appointed positions.

"Start the run," says "Guns," the villain of the piece.

Then ensues what to the average person seems pandemonium—a mere Babel. "Nine—o—five —o" from one corner; "Up two hundred" from somewhere else; "Five—o closing" from a third; "Fire" from somewhere else—all apparently at the same time.

Yet things seem to progress; the experts say that it is very good practice.

II.

As regards other relaxations—some we have provided for us, others we make for ourselves.

Of the former variety the mail undoubtedly holds the place of honour. After a week or ten days at sea its receipt becomes the goal of our lives, and he who draws a blank when the time comes is deserving of all pity (friends and relations please note).

Letters, of course, are the greatest joy; parcels generally arrive sadly mutilated; papers, except of the weekly illustrated variety, are not appreciated quite as much as might be expected, for the reason that the sudden arrival of ten days' news at one fell swoop creates somewhat of an *embarras de richesse*. Also the actual information in the earlier ones is often stale, for (and here we are very lucky) we generally manage to take in the wireless press telegrams every night—our own, the French, and the Wolff Agency's perversion of the truth.

"Is there a Poldhu?" is the invariable remark of each arrival at the breakfast table, and blank indeed is a day at sea without one. The name probably explains itself; in case it does not, it may be mentioned that the British press wireless is sent out by Poldhu, the high-power station in Cornwall.

But on our very last trip we were told that we must not expect "Poldhu"; the "exigencies of the service would not permit" (a grand expression that, which in peace time may cover anything from the refusal of forty-eight hours' leave to cancelling a royal review). Nevertheless, after the fifth day, the following appeared on the Ward-room notice-board:—

PHOOLDHU TELEGRAM.

The situation in France is as it is. The Press Bureau, while not vouching for the accuracy of this statement, does not object to its publication.

It is reported on excellent authority that four Zeppelins, disguised as barn-door fowls, were seen on Tuesday last to drop bomb-shaped eggs over Bill's Rock; on examination, the bombs proved to be hard-boiled, which is evidence of the great speed the airships attained in their flight. This statement is vouched for by the village schoolmistress, who broke her sole remaining molar in trying to masticate one of the eggs.

Eight German submarines reported to have been seen at Brighton by prominent local inhabitant on emerging from the Hotel Metropole at 10.50 P.M. The Press Bureau, while not vouching for the correctness of the number, says that it would be unwise to discredit entirely the report; perhaps four may have been the actual number seen.

Seven columns of smoke reported at Margate; on investigation traces of ship's tobacco discovered on the beach may account for this unusual spectacle; there is no confirmation of

the report that they emanated from German ships.

It has transpired that on September 17 traces of 500,000 Russian Kromeskis were found at Wick; this is considered positive proof that a Russian force was landed there the previous day.

It is reported that the British Fleet are laying mines of a most deadly nature to the north of Heligoland. These are barrel-shaped, and have painted on them in large letters "LAGER BIER."

There is no truth in the rumour that the President of Liberia has offered his services as intermediary between the belligerent Powers.

Can. Pacs. 108½, Pan Cakes remain hard.

St Kilda 2, Lundy Island 1. Ephesians *v.* Brighton Bluenoses scratched, teams too wet to play.

"What on earth——?" Lieutenant Wilson, who is not renowned for a vast sense of humour, checks himself, but not quite in time.

"So it did after all?" says Saxon, whom we may strongly suspect of being one of "its" authors.

"Did what?"

"Look at the first word of the title."

CHAPTER VI.

A LAND BREEZE.

"WET!" —— "Dry!"—— Splosh! —— Scrub, scrub, scrub.

To Roy Langton, in that blissful state, between sleeping and waking, the noises in the flat outside seemed a part of his dream, and subconsciously, when a few seconds later his servant switched on the light, he expected to see — not the bare chipped walls of his cabin, but the fairy spot whither his sleep-fogged fancy had led him. Then slowly he realised just where he was—realised that the scrub, scrub, scrub outside was not the plash of waves, that the voices of the cleaning party were not the confused murmur of a summer beach.

Fully awake now he listens, for this is the hour when little gems of lower-deck badinage fly around, but apparently to-day is an off-day, and Able

Seaman "Nobby" Clark, evidently realising the lack of the customary sparkling wit, tries to rise to the occasion.

"What is the Navy doing?" he banteringly asks, reiterating a question that a certain thoughtless section of the B.P. seem, if we read aright, to be asking.

"Mopping up water," laconically answers the recognised wag of the party, as, on his knees, he "mops up" with the "dry" that has just been thrown him by one of the wizards at the steaming tub in his rear.

"Nobby" returns to the attack. "Ah, Percay, my bhoy," he observes to a grimy individual busily engaged in cleaning brightwork, "how d'ye do?"

"I don't."

This is too much for "Nobby." Contemptuously he gazes on his fellow-workers, sucks his teeth, and then delivers himself of the following homily:—

"Of all the mouldy perishing pessimists, you blighters take the blinkin' bun. Stepped out of yer 'ammicks on the wrong side, I presoom; or," and here he specially addresses the grimy individual, "per'aps that pint o' port wine" (we always drink our port by the pint on the lower deck) "we 'ad together at the Chatoo Frontenac last night" ("Nobby" has a passion for airing a spurious

knowledge of high life in far-off cities) "still lies 'eavy on yer stummick!"

He pauses, but his indignation is not completely worked off yet. "Pah," he observes, "you remind me o' the yarn o' the little girl and the school teacher."

"What's that, Nobby?" asks Ordinary Seaman Read, who feels that something must be done to appease the great man's wrath ("Nobby" is somewhat of a bruiser).

"What, ain't none of you 'eard it?" "Nobby's" face brightens as he begins. "Well, it's like this yere. School-marm she sees a little girl a-settin' down at the back o' the room long after the rest o' the kids 'ad gone away, cryin' 'er 'eart out. 'What's the matter, 'Ilda?'—'Ilda was the youngster's name, I should 'ave mentioned—she sez, 'you ought not ter be cryin'; just think 'ow lucky you are. 'Asn't the Good Gawd given you eyes to see with, a nose to smell with, feet to run with, ears to 'ear with——?' 'Yes, Miss,' sez little 'Ilda; 'but 'E must 'ave gotter bit mixed up with me, 'cause it's me nose wot runs and me feet wot smells.' And," concludes "Nobby," "from the looks o' all yer ugly dials——" but disgust cuts dry any further remarks.

"Per'aps I am a bit down-'earted, Nobby," says he of the grimy face, "but so would you be

if you was in the rattle same as me. Lost me 'ammick, I 'ave; cawn't find me boots; Gawd 'ates me; don't arf wish I was dead, I don't."

By this time the party have finished their job (and perhaps *you* have gained a fleeting insight into the meaning of this chapter's opening lines, and into the solemn service ritual of "scrubbing out"). They move off, taking their woes with them.

To-day is a great day, Langton suddenly remembers. Yesterday we arrived in harbour early in the morning, did a big coaling, washed down, and turned in with the pleasant news that, provided the notice for steam was not altered to-morrow, as many as could be spared would have a chance of going ashore. The fates, too, must be working for us, for an afternoon ashore with no money in our pockets would be a very barren affair—but "October 1" reads the calendar, and on the Quartermaster's slate is written, "11.25 A.M. monthly payment."

The forenoon passes on leaden wings, but at last comes the pipe, "'A-a-nds fall in for payment starboard side of gun-room flat."

Quickly the first hundred (we fall in by hundreds under our own officers) are mustered and ready. At the pay-table stands the Fleet Paymaster, idly fingering a £500 pile of Treasury

notes as one does a new pack of cards; at his side Saxon faces a huge heap of florins and shillings, while seated on a high stool is the ship's office Writer, ledger spread open before him.

"First hundred, 'Shun!——Left turn!——By the right, Quick march!——Halt!"

"Jeremiah Tucker," the Writer calls out.

"Number one, sir," and up steps Petty Officer Jeremiah Tucker; deftly he removes his cap and holds it in front of the Fleet Paymaster.

"Two pounds fifteen," says the writer, and in a second on Tucker's upturned cap repose two one-pound notes, a ten-shilling one, two florins and a shilling. Tucker passes on and round to the port side of the flat, where the other members of the Accountant Officer's staff — the ship's steward and his satellites—are waiting to issue the monthly allowance of soap and tobacco.

Here there is not so much ceremony. "Two," says Tucker, and in reply is quickly furnished with two bars of soap (Pusser's yellow) and a pound of leaf tobacco. That comparatively modern production — the tinned variety — is looked upon with contempt by him, as a raw steward's assistant found to his cost last month when into the P.O.'s hands he had thrust two tins. "'Ere, what are you giving me?" Tucker had observed; "do you think I'm a young leddy and a-going to smoke this in my boodoir?"

At the pay-table things move apace. The routine is well known by the active-service members of the ship's company, and it is not till the Royal Naval Reserve men are reached that the first hitch occurs; they are not yet quite conversant with the recognised procedure.

"Angus Morrison," the Writer calls out.

No movement takes place in the waiting queue.

"Angus Morrison," he repeats in a louder voice.

Morrison, temporarily mesmerised, receives a jab in the ribs from the Master-at-Arms' pencil, whereupon he shuffles up to the table and stands there sheepishly.

"Number," simultaneously from four voices.

"W seven four two five, sirr." Morrison feels that he is getting on all right now.

"Not your official number, your ship's books' number," snaps out the Master-at-Arms. The group at the table (the Fleet Paymaster, Saxon, and the Officer of the Watch) begin to wear a resigned expression, as, from the previous experience of R.N.R. men at annual manœuvres, they know what to expect.

"Two, sir."

"One pound ten," announces the Writer.

The Fleet Paymaster holds out two notes, but there is no cap outstretched on which to place them.

"Cap," from four voices in unison.

Morrison doffs his cap, out of which drop a half-smoked "woodbine," an envelope, a small quid of tobacco, and a stumpy clay pipe; the latter breaks on reaching the deck.

But at last his troubles are over and he moves out of the limelight.

As one bell strikes the last man is paid. "An hour," says Saxon, checking the time with his wrist-watch, "pretty rotten." But really it is not bad work accurately to deal out about two thousand pounds, two-thirds of which are in notes, to a thousand men in one hour.

"How much have you made, Pay?" facetiously asks the Officer of the Watch.

"Made?" queries the Fleet Paymaster; "if I don't have to put in something to square off, I shall be very much surprised."

One o'clock sees the picket boat off to the shore with a heavy complement of officers, and then, a few minutes later, the Quartermaster shrilly pipes, "Landing party, fall in!"

How we enjoy ourselves! What a blessed relief it is to step once more on shore, to get away for an hour or two from our over-familiar surroundings.

But of course some—both officers and men—

cannot get away, and in the ward-room, at the "seven bell" tea-time, a rather dejected company sit down at the table.

Here are the Commander (ever busy), the Fleet Paymaster and Saxon (who have been occupied in "clewing up" the payment), Wilson (who has the first dog-watch), Terence Rooney (Engineer Commander *pro tem.*), the Young Doctor (P.M.O. *pro tem.*), and one or two more.

The duty servant enters in response to a violent prolonged ringing of the bell, and is at once assailed by Terence with, "What about tay, it's gone seven bells?"

"Aye, aye, sir," replies the duty servant. "Tea just being wetted." (We never "make" tea, we always "wet" it!)

Another waiter, with a very apparent "afternoon caulk fat head," appears and noisily scatters plates, knives, bread, butter, and jam about the table.

Suddenly, as if some mysterious force had made them of one mind, nearly all the officers present bombard him with a single word, "Tea!"

At this stage the trap-hatch to the pantry shoots up, and in company with a rather nauseating smell mysterious noises float through; evidently the wetting process is well in hand.

A few minutes pass, every one preserving a dignified—albeit "mouldy"—silence. Then the Pay in an aggrieved voice summons the duty servant. "Waiter," he says, "take this away; it's absolutely black. Get me some weak tea, please."

Again that mysterious force that makes so many minds think as one gets to work, for suddenly there ensues a perfect babel of "Milk please, sugar please, bread please, jam please, butter please."

Saxon, who up to now has not been served, reaps the result of his boss's observation on the tea, for his, when it arrives, is suitable enough for even the most delicate nerves. "Take this away," he says, "and get me some TEA. And," handing the waiter the milk-jug, "some MILK too; this is pure water at present."

The duty servant takes the milk-jug, but having put his hand into the butter whilst handing that commodity round a few seconds previously, lets it slip through his fingers. The jug falls upright on the table and for some reason does not break, but plentifully sprinkles Saxon and Wilson with a fluid which would appear to belie the statement that its contents were pure water.

Saxon and Wilson make but one observation, "Damn."

"Marmalade please, waiter," demands the young Doctor.

"No marmalade, sir."

Exasperation is writ large on the young Doctor's countenance. "I asked for jam at breakfast and was told there was none," he says, "now there's no marmalade. Have we got a mess committee——?" Hastily he stops, having suddenly remembered — the first time since his election—that he himself is a member of that select body.

Here a hitherto unheard but aggressively cheerful officer remarks, "We shall quite dislike fresh milk when we do get any again, shan't we?"

The others merely glare at him. The meal finishes in silence.

Five o'clock comes long before we are ready for it, but although there are one or two stragglers, full numbers eventually arrive back on board. A few have fallen by the wayside, and perhaps *you* (who by now know so much about us and our ways) can guess the names of one or two of the delinquents?

Yes, you are quite right, for among the small group of those who have not been allowed to fall out stand—or rather sway—Private Spooner

and Gunner Murphy. And besides imbibing their favourite "hops," these two have been marketing, for in his right hand the former clasps an enormous crayfish, one claw of which he playfully nibbles.

"Anything to say?" the Officer of the Watch asks each one.

"No, sir, is the invariable thick-voiced reply, till comes the turn of Private Spooner.

At first it seems that his brain is too fogged for anything. "No, sir," he manages to get out; and then, a second after, momentarily bracing himself up, he bursts forth, "Yes, sir, I 'as. I know I'm drunk; I know yew're a-goin' to put me dahn below; but" (here he brandishes the crayfish in the Officer of the Watch's face) "can I take this perishin' canary with me?"

"Master-at-Arms, put your men below; Sergeant-Major, yours too; but first of all throw the canary overboard."

Officers of Watches, though they generally possess a keen sense of humour, must not be too sympathetic. And it was Wilson, as has been said, who had the first dog-watch.

CHAPTER VII.

". . . THE KING'S HIGHWAY!"
—SIR HENRY NEWBOLT.

To come into harbour for a short time is always good, especially so after a long spell at sea in the equinoctial gale season. And this morning, as we approach our base and have just opened the hatches and scuttles after eleven days "battened down"—eleven days of life (with a very small "l") on tinned air and tinned everything—the distant land looks tantalisingly beautiful. Daylight came with a gorgeous dawn, and now the scene is superb, with the near hills in their proper colours of green and brown, and those of the middle distance changing, as the light each moment grows stronger, from grey to wonderful blends of mauve and purple; while capping them all far away stand the distant mountains, sombre in their misty neutral tints.

During the last eleven days we have been on

patrol work; have been, in fact, in charge of a certain patrol composed of a sister ship and a nondescript collection of small gunboats. On the surface, not a very appropriate duty for a vessel of our size and importance, but one needs to look a long way below the surface these times. Canada's sons are crossing the ocean just now. *Verbum sat sapienti.*

Life on such work is apt to be rather dull and monotonous, for it is somewhat difficult to enter into the routine with quite the same zest as usual, when it is known that the operation on which the ship is engaged is what the authorities call merely a "precautionary measure."

But it is only right to take the rough with the smooth, and we cannot expect to be always doing the same sort of "stunt" as our last one, when we appeared off Heligoland again and openly offered battle to the enemy—but to no effect. It was a wonderful sight that day when, after all hopes of a "scrap" had been abandoned, practically the whole of the striking force of the British Navy assembled in a few square miles of the North Sea, and then, under the supreme command, proceeded to manœuvre and exercise just as in peace time.

What a landsman's feelings would have been, could he have been present, it is impossible to

guess. The ordinary Spithead review, with the ships anchored in seemingly endless lines, is impressive beyond words, but here, with the flower of the Empire's naval might cleared for action, was a scene to baffle adequate description. Would that the Kaiser might have had just one glimpse; perhaps he would have described it after the fashion of impressionable people — too beautiful to be seen twice in a lifetime.

So the exploit from which we are returning seemed very drab in comparison, and of course dirty weather always brings to the fore the grey side of things.

Most people's ideas of "dirty weather" consist of a hazy remembrance of the sight (if they were not actual sufferers, in which case they shared the feelings) of a large number of green-faced individuals being solicitously tended in their infirmity by sympathetic stewards. But if they rack their brains still further they will remember that the general life of the ship went on much as before; that for the unafflicted things were (save for the motion) just as nice and comfortable, meals just as tasty and well served, life just as interesting as in the days when a calm sea and an azure sky were all that the universe as far as the horizon had to offer.

That is dirty weather *de luxe*.

For it is very different with us, where as regards the ship's construction alone comfort has to go by the board in favour of efficiency —as is but right. We are lucky in one way, though, for there are not many of the green-visaged brigade in our midst. Even if there happen from time to time to be a few, they are not allowed to be drones in consequence; however green they may become, still they have to remain workers.

But taken on the whole, our life during a prolonged spell of gales is—rotten. The motion, though all part of the day's work, puts a premium on most recreations. Exercise is impossible, for the upper deck is sea- and spray-swept, and an unnecessary visit to it only invites a wet back. Writing, when half one's thoughts are centred on preventing the inkpot gracefully gliding to the deck, is too tedious to be indulged in more than necessary (but of course we *all* use fountain pens — *vide* the advertisements in the press!). Meals are beastly. The atmosphere in the living spaces is—well, it just is not! And everything one touches is clammy and sticky. The *tout ensemble* is inclined, to say the least, to make one a trifle peevish, and of the customary alleviations to the trivial round

there remain but two—the one literary (reading), the other rhetorical (discussions, arguments, and yarns).

And that makes it necessary to introduce fully a fresh personage: Sinbad the Sailor he is called in the ward-room; Cargo Bill is his nickname on the lower deck; Lieutenant George Henry Marks, Royal Naval Reserve, is how the Navy List describes him. Sinbad is our great "yarnster."

It would be hard to find any one more vitriolic in his sentiments against the Germans than Sinbad. Perhaps this is for the reason that before the war he was regularly sailing in and out of Hamburg on the West African trade, and the worthy Hamburgers apparently did not like to have the peace and quietness of the "Bier Halle" invaded by the rowdy Englander. For when Sinbad and his *confrères* went in for what he styles a "rough house," evidently they made the fat, beer-swilling Germans sit up "some."

But it is when Sinbad talks of his dealings with the West African nigger that he is most amusing.

By now we know his views so well—that you cannot rule a nigger by kindness. Probably he is right, and he has a long first-hand experience of the western African coast on which to base

his opinions, but we always disagree on principle for argument's sake.

"Come across a nigger in your path," he says, "and get out of his way: a look of contempt at once passes over that black man's face as he says to himself, 'Dat man, he 'fraid ob me.' But go straight on, and if he does not move off give him a jolly good kick: 'Ah,' says the nigger, 'Dat man my master; he proper white man!'"

But there are different grades of white men in the nigger mind, apparently, and Sinbad illustrated this by a little story.

"I was Chief of a ship," he says, "with a German third officer. Up came the head Krooboy: 'I speak to you, massa?' he asked.

"I nodded.

"'Well, massa, be like dis. I take beating from you. I take beating from first or second. But if third officer he try beat me, I knife him. He no white man; he bush white man; *all* German bush white man.'"

Which, to our minds, shows the black man to be of great wisdom. But that he himself lays no claim to such a qualification is illustrated by another little yarn of Sinbad's.

"I once saw a nigger watching a monkey with unconcealed admiration," so he tells the

story, "so just to pull his leg I asked him if a monkey was not much cleverer than a nigger."

"'Yes, sah,' the Krooboy answered, in no way insulted, 'monkey he very clebber. Can do anything 'cept talk, and he really can do dat but nebber will, cos he knows once he talk he made work all same nigger.'"

But Sinbad's most humorous yarns could not possibly get into print.

The ward-room discussions cover a vast range of subjects, but up to the present in only two has anything like unanimity of opinion reigned. It was last night that we decided by an overwhelming majority—

(*a*) That all lawyers should be shot.

(*b*) That the universal payment of £400 a year to M.P.'s was a scandal.

Perhaps it should be stated that no personal animus was shown or meant in arriving at these conclusions!

Certainly it seems incomprehensible why the major part of our prize-money should go into the lawyers' pockets, as (when distribution is made) it undoubtedly will. But of course they deserve it. The Prize Court work is so much more tiring, nerve-racking, and generally arduous than ours!

Sandall voiced most people's opinions when he

heatedly declaimed, "It's too late to become a lawyer, but after the war I'm going to chuck this job and get into Parliament. Four hundred a year is much more easily earned that way than as a Commander (if I ever rise to that exalted rank) of one of H.M. ships or vessels. Besides, once elected, you need not appear more than once a year."

"That's one good thing, anyway, about our parliamentary system," interposed Martin,—"attendance not compulsory; thus some Guardian Angel saves poor old England from absolute ruin."

Here, for the first time, we noticed the presence in our midst of Lieutenant Fraser, Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve, *M.P.!*

On the lower deck things are much the same. Sleep, reading, writing—the average "matloe's" correspondence is not extensive enough to become tedious even under the vilest weather conditions—and yarning seem to fill in the few leisure moments of the day.

There, seated in an odd corner, laboriously balancing a ditty box on his knee, can be seen Private Spooner, keeping up his correspondence (in the intervals of sucking an indelible pencil with dire results to his tongue) with the fair sex; and though the letter is full of ardent terms of endear-

ment, the envelope is addressed to a town at least a hundred miles from Balham.

But Spooner is a man of many loves.

A very comprehensive range of literature is covered by the "matloe's" taste—abstruse professional text-books, sentimental love stories (Charles Garvice has quite a following on the lower deck), and "Deadwood Dicks." Discussions and yarns do not generally deal with matters of such grave moment (!) as those in which the ward-room delights; the reminiscent "touch" figures largely, and "do you remember" is a very frequent opening.

Yet, though the "dirty weather" existence seems rather dreary, we generally get the news of the day (actually of the day before yesterday). Poldhu provides us with our 'Times,' 'Morning Post,' 'Daily Telegraph,' 'Standard,' 'Daily Mail,' 'Daily News,' 'Daily Chronicle,' 'Observer,' 'People,' &c., and from the mysterious precincts of the coding office we often glean titbits of news which our wireless has intercepted. Though we ourselves do not seem to come across much of the Romance of the High Seas, the wireless now and again gives us a breath of it.

How two such "intercepts" appealed to some one's imagination and inspired his contribution to the initial number of 'Flap! A magazine of

originality' (it appeared the first day we came to sea), the following verbatim extracts will show:—

SOME "INTERCEPTS."

—— *to Commander-in-Chief, Grand Fleet.*

"Zeppelin reported here last night. Was seen by local shepherd."

Commander-in-Chief, Grand Fleet, to ——

"If you have not already done so, send an officer ashore to interview the man who saw the Zeppelin. Report result."

* * * * * *

"Yes, zur, Oi zeed un; a-sailin' over the tree-tops beootiful, she wor. By goles, sez Oi to meself, that's one o' them there airyships."

"Noa, zur, I couldn't roightly zay what she looked loike; jest a gert big mass a-scuddin' across the sky that quick Oi could 'ardly keep my eyes on 'er."

"What toime was it, zur? Why, just arter closin' toime at the ''Are and 'Ounds.' I come out o' the door—landlord doant gie ee a minute arter toime—and started off for 'ome. . . . And when Oi picked meself up from the middle of the road, I looked up into the sky and zeed un plain.

Oi scratched me 'ead, and sez Oi to meself, That might be one o' these yere *Z*ellepins—and then agen, sez Oi, it might not."

"Noa, zur, Oi 'adn't 'ad what you might roightly call much. Just me usual six pints. Oh yes, zur, Oi seed un plain."

* * * * * *

—— *to Commander-in-Chief, Grand Fleet.*

"Investigation has shown that no credence can be attached to the report of a *Z*eppelin having been seen here."

Admiralty to Commander-in-Chief, Grand Fleet.

"British sailing vessel —— left —— on July 15 with a cargo of nickel for Hamburg. Owners ask that she may be sent into a British port."

* * * * * *

The captain of the British sailing ship —— was walking up and down the poop with his mate. Every few minutes he stopped to level his telescope at a certain spot on the horizon—a spot where, though at first to the naked eye there appeared nothing, gradually showed up a smoke cloud, then masts, and shortly after the tops of four funnels.

"There's one of these durned men-o'-war coming up," he said, snapping the glass to and tucking it under his arm; "and," inconsequently, "I hate men-o'-war's-men."

Together they watched her, as minute by minute the cruiser loomed up bigger and bigger.

"An' she's coming right for us," said the mate; "some speed too."

Fascinated against their will, the two men stood watching the cruiser as she approached them. She was a bare mile away when a puff of smoke came from one of her smaller guns, and then the loud boom of the charge followed through the air. A string of flags at her yard-arm gave a peremptory signal to the —— to stop.

Sullenly the sailing-ship's captain gave the necessary orders. As he had said, he entertained no love for men-of-war, and on the high seas to be ordered to heave to, and apparently to be boarded—the cruiser by now was almost alongside and was lowering a boat—was just about as much as he could stand. "One of their manœuvre stunts, I suppose," he growled between his teeth.

With frigid politeness he received the naval lieutenant. The latter wasted no time over what he had to say.

"You left —— on July 15 with a cargo of nickel for Hamburg, didn't you?" he rapped out.

"And might I ask what that's got to do with you?" rejoined the skipper, making a mental note that his ship's doings seemed to be pretty well known to His Majesty's Navy.

"Now, no nonsense, please; I've no time to waste," said the lieutenant, obviously ruffled and annoyed. Then suddenly a gleam of illumination spread over his features.

"Have you spoken any one since you left?" he added.

"No," was the reply.

"Well then, Captain ——"

"Thomson," the blank was filled for him.

"Well then, Captain Thomson, it may interest you to know that the country under whose flag you are sailing has been at war since August 4 with the country to which your cargo is consigned. Your owners want you to go to Liverpool. Good-bye."

And almost before the astonished Captain Thomson and his mate had recovered their senses, the cutter was well on her way back again. At the cruiser's yard-arm another signal in International Code intimated to the —— that she was "to proceed in accordance with orders given."

We are a mile from our anchorage now. Awaiting our arrival we can espy (glorious sight) the mail drifter, and a little farther off a —— yes, it *is* a collier.

Ugh!

CHAPTER VIII.

PRESENTS.

YESTERDAY each of us was presented with a swimming-collar—a sausage-shaped, stockingette-enclosed, rubber affair, to be inflated after the fashion of an air-cushion.

Engineer-Lieutenant Terence Rooney, with great gusto, blew his up to wellnigh bursting point, and then, red-faced and panting with exertion, regarded it curiously.

"Well, if they expect you to wear it round your chest," he said, "they must think the Navy's manned with pygmies."

"Shure, and it's not afther puttin' it round your chest you must be," mockingly answered Saxon.

"Pwhere, then?"

"What's the thing called? Personally, though no doubt it would be very 'toney,' I never wear my collar round my chest."

"Ah," said Terence, suddenly enlightened, "round your neck!"

This morning there appeared on all the various notice-boards the following:—

The swimming-collars which have been issued are to be always at hand: by day, deflated, on the person; by night, inflated and hung from the hammock clews. Punctures are to be reported to officers of divisions.

Thus we are compulsorily made to safeguard ourselves to a small extent "from the dangers of the sea, and from the violence of the enemy." A great blow, this, to the fatalists who, quite happy in leaving matters (if it ever does come to swimming!) on the knees of the gods, had rather scoffed at those among us who had provided themselves with various forms of life-saving apparatus. And certainly some of the improvised articles merit the jeers they have brought down on their owners heads, for they are ludicrous in the extreme.

A *sine qua non* of any device is that it must be of such a nature that it can be permanently worn, or at least kept in the pocket. Thus such things as the regulation cork life-belt are rather beyond the pale, for you simply cannot spend your whole day rigged up as a lifeboatman. The

field of choice is practically narrowed down to pneumatic contrivances.

One officer has provided himself with an air-cushion of the double square variety, which he has fitted up so that it can be worn—with great inconvenience and to the detriment of his personal appearance—under his monkey-jacket.

Another owns a similar affair of the circular type, with a large hole in the centre, to be sported (so we suppose, though he will not actually acknowledge it) *à la* Elizabethan ruffle.

Several carry (when they remember) motor-bicycle tyres in their pockets.

And one (he shall be nameless, as perhaps it is not his fault; he has been married very recently!) is the proud possessor of all the three contraptions just mentioned, and in addition a "Quidos" jacket and a Board of Trade life-belt. We beg and pray him not to take to the deep (if ever the necessity arrives) clad in all these articles; besides the risk of being used as a raft, he could not possibly avoid being taken for a submarine by any rescuing vessels that might arrive on the scene. (As doubtless will have been guessed, we are only safeguarding ourselves against the dangers of an involuntary swim if "submarined.")

Now, here he is presented with a swimming-collar in addition.

But as the days go on we wonder—if we ever think about it at all—whether when the time comes (if it does) we shall want to prolong the agony. For the cold weather approaches apace in the North Sea, and already, though October is little more than half spent, we seem to have suddenly dropped into mid-winter. The calm clear day that comes now and then—when the sun beats down as in the spring—makes the chill grey morrow seem all the colder in comparison.

By now, though, we are well equipped for the most rigorous weather that these regions can possibly spring on us; the Admiralty and a charitable public have seen to that. We have mufflers galore, beautiful thick socks, gloves, mittens, Balaclava helmets, and—well——everything needful to keep out the cold. A narrative such as this is not the place to discuss the masculine wardrobe quite so fully as certain illustrated weeklies (and *not* the ones intended for ladies only) describe that of the opposite sex.

"What do we know about that?" He who runs may read, and when papers are so precious that even the advertisements are almost learnt by heart, it stands to reason that we are not

going to miss a long article whose illustrations, too, are so very *chic*.

Yes, we have all we can possibly want in the clothing line. And till the novelty wears off and familiarity breeds contempt for the "dressing up" entailed, we shall probably wear during the next week or two an absolutely unnecessary quantity of gear; *probably* during the day (if we can escape from the watchful eye of "authority"), *certainly* when on duty at night.

Some of us wear Balaclavas in our hammocks!

But the "matloe" is a weird "kettle o' fish."

And writing of gifts in the shape of "warm comforts" brings to mind presents of other descriptions that are showered on us. Though our doings must of necessity be wrapped in silence and secrecy, evidently we are not forgotten. Every visit to harbour seems to bring something fresh—one day huge cases of books; another, evaporated apples from far-off Ontario; another, tobacco from Rhodesia, and so on.

To-night our duffle suits and Balaclavas are very welcome. Day had ended with a vivid sunset, blood-red storm-clouds scudding across the face of the sun as it sank below the horizon. For a space a watery moon had fitfully shone through the racing clouds, to be gradually blotted

out by the rolling greyness. Now, as through the inky darkness the chill nor'-easter each moment blows stronger, as the ship, dipping her nose into the sea, "takes it green" over the length of the forecastle, as the spray and spume reach right up to the massive height of the bridge, we know that we are in for a dirty night —and dirty days and nights to come.

"What's the barometer now?" asks the Captain of Lieutenant Fraser, R.N.V.R., "makee-learn" officer of the watch under Langton.

Fraser does not know. He is still rather bewildered at the multitudinous items of knowledge one must have at one's finger-tips when officer of the watch. But he has quickly picked up the sea-going faculty (or did he learn it in Parliament?) of preserving an unruffled countenance and answering something.

"27.75, sir," comes out pat.

"Oh, I cannot quite credit that," says the Captain, with (could one but see it in the darkness) a twinkle in the corner of his eye. "What do you make the barometer, Mr Langton?"

"29.75, sir, and dropping fast."

"Um!" muses the Captain, "even with that it's knocking the bottom out of itself quite quickly enough for my liking."

Fraser discreetly retires for a time to the corner

of the bridge. For the benefit of those who generally couple barometer readings with the words "Rain, Changeable, Fair," &c., it may be mentioned that the record lowest reading is somewhere about 27.50.

And the gale is only just starting.

Eight bells strike—midnight. Muffled forms laboriously make their way up to the bridge, clinging for dear life to ladder or stanchion as they meet the full force of the wind, tucking their chins further into the necks of their duffle coats as the spray lashes them.

From different spots in the pitch blackness scraps of hurried conversation drift astern; the watch just going off duty are "turning over" to their reliefs.

"Everything's all right," says Langton cheerily, "the fleet is as usual, the —— is ahead, you can just see her. It's a filthy night and the glass is simply tumbling down!" Then follow a few directions as to course and speed, guns' crews, &c., and a reference to some one called "the owner." "So long."

A grunt signifies Sinbad's acquiescence. What a huge difference there is in the "going off" and "coming on" watch manner!

Langton and Fraser clatter down the ladder.

Sinbad checks his bearing and distance from the phantom next ahead, satisfies himself that everything *is* all right, and settles down to the four-hour vigil.

"Mr Barclay!" he suddenly calls out.

"Sir!" from the blackness, and a very young midshipman sidles up to his elbow.

"What is it to-night?"

This seemingly ambiguous question has, however, no ambiguity for Barclay.

"Soup, sir. I thought you would be getting a bit tired of cocoa."

It is an unwritten law that the midshipman of a night watch brings up with him all the necessaries and impedimenta for concocting something warming to the inner man.

CHAPTER IX.

GALES.

"'Tis the hard gray weather
Breeds hard English men."
—KINGSLEY.

VERY rightly did the bygone ages of seamen bestow on easterly weather its present fickle reputation. For four days out of a clear-cut black horizon the north-easter blew, with a low but steadied barometer; for four days we bucketed about amid waves that hourly seemed to grow bigger and more awe-inspiring; for four days, chilled to the bone, we gazed out on the incessant white flurry of a grey and white sea—the whole now dull and ominous-looking under a rolling dark sky, now sparkling steely, greeny black as a brilliant sun lit up its crests and furrows; one day driving our nose into the foam-capped combers, the next riding comparatively easily with the tumult astern. Then,

on the fifth morning, came the looked-for gentle rise of the glass, and it brought us by evening—not, as we hoped, the climax of the gale before the calm, but biting villainous hail and rain. Still the glass rose slowly and easily, still the easterly weather lived up to its capricious character by doing anything but what one would have expected; then suddenly the rain stopped, in about an hour almost the wind died down, the barometer began to fall very slowly, and yesterday we had a perfect day of autumn sunshine—a day which, for the time of the year, seemed strangely and almost oppressively hot.

Evening saw us making for "home" with a gentle south-easterly breeze astern; by eleven we were safely at anchor, and quickly all who could turned in—to woo as many hours sleep as an early start at the 1800-ton coaling on the morrow would allow.

Ting-a-ling-a-ling-a-ling-a-ling . . . !

Lying half awake in our hammocks this morning, we snatch a few seconds' grace before the ship's corporal again bestows his attentions on us, and simultaneously as he gives the foot-clews of the hammock that happens to be nearest him a violent jerk, commands us all and sundry to "Show a leg, show a leg, lash up and sto-o-w!"

Lazily we rack our brains to put a name to that other noise that assailed our sleep-fuddled hearing when the "crusher" brought us to life a bare minute ago. Then *Ting-a-ling-a-ling* . . . it again breaks forth.

The fog bell! So the easterly weather is treating us to the full gamut of his caprices—wind, rain, hail, sunshine, calm, and now fog.

But that is not going to postpone coaling. Oh dear, no. Already the blare of a distant syren proclaims that the collier is timidly nosing her way towards us.

We turn out, and, grumbling and grousing the while, perform that seemingly impossible feat of "cleaning" into a dirty rig. (The only explanation of this phenomenon necessary, however, is that a service dictionary—were there such a thing—would describe "*clean*," in the sense in which we use it, as—"*v., to dress, to put on clothes.*") Presently, having successfully got outside a bowl of steaming cocoa, we are ready for the much-hated work of the day.

Perhaps some of the officers not needed on deck to superintend the work of securing and "rigging" the collier (a busy torpedo party have already turned night into day—so far as the fog allows—with clusters here and there of blazing electric lights) have given themselves a few

minutes' grace, but their respite from the grimy realities of to-day's "common task" is very short-lived,

"A quarter past four, sir. It's pretty cold and there's a thick fog." Thus Langton's servant rouses his master from a heavy slumber wherein thoughts of coaling and kindred abominations held no sway.

Soon various weirdly apparelled, sleepy, and petulant figures assemble in the ward-room, and in an almost universal stony silence drink a perfectly filthy cup of tea and gulp down a few decidedly dry and uninteresting sandwiches. Any remarks made are of the peevish character which early rising and an impending distasteful job engender.

"Thick fog now; it'll be raining before we've really started," says Wilson, always rather prone to look on the dull side of things. Some grunt in acquiescence; one responds—"Yes, it's a real go into the garden and eat worms day." Otherwise, silence.

"Clear lower deck, hands coal ship," comes the pipe, and up on deck we all troop—a motley throng indeed.

Absolutely any rig is allowed for coaling, and divers are the sartorial effects sported. Probably, for the men, this small fact takes the edge off the

day's drudgery, for firmly ingrained in the average "matloe" is an ineradicable love of "dressing up."

Observe the Padre's servant with a discarded clerical hat surmounting footer rig—the latter peculiarly attenuated as to the knickers, while next him walks Private Spooner clad in riding breeches (evidently another cast-off item of an officer's wardrobe in the pre-war days) and plain clothes coat; the brim of a bowler in conjunction with his own curly black hair provides him with a piquant (albeit inefficient!) imitation headpiece. Of course we do not all dress up; the vast majority appear quite soberly clad either in overalls or our oldest suit, but those members of the community on whom individually the lower deck bestows the euphemistic title of "a bird" always vie with each other in the production of comical effects.

To a stranger the blaze of electric light would reveal an extraordinary sight as the inmates of this human hive hurry and skurry to their stations—some in the collier, to be swallowed up in the gloomy holds or to tend the winches, out-hauls, &c., the others in the ship. And Wilson's prophecy has come true; by now the weather is what the natives of the country call "a wee bit saaft."

But are we downhearted? *No.* Already from

the depths of the foremost hold come snatches of song—"Who were you with last night?" "Tipperary," and (the bluejacket always loves anything sentimental)—

> "Night, and the stars are gleaming,
> Tender and true;
> Dearest, my heart is dreaming,
> Dreaming of you."

"Sound the commence, bugler," orders the Commander. Comes the chatter of a winch, the splutter and hiss of steam, the murmur and creak of block, the sibilant whisper of whip, and then with a thud the first hoist of the day is landed inboard.

Any work proceeds all the better when a spirit of emulation can be infused among the workers. On board the ship at the four "dumping" grounds this is rather difficult to do, but in the collier itself (where is the hardest job of the lot—filling bags at lightning speed) we work hold against hold. On the coaming of the hatch is chalked up, hour by hour, our own score and those of our rivals, and thus, each hold striving against the other, the work proceeds apace.

At three we finished. It was not a good coaling. Things went wrong so very often:

winches broke down, blocks jammed, whips broke, long before the end one hold was swept and empty, and—it was a vile day.

II.

Undoubtedly one of the phenomena of this war—as regards our own life—is the speed at which the time passes. Whether it is that we are always more or less busy, that there is some interest or excitement attaching to almost every minute of the day, it is absolutely true that never in any of our lives has the time passed so quickly as during these last three months. Except perhaps in Sinbad's case; at least if we can believe one yarn of his wherein he is the hero, several "dagoes" armed with knives the villains, and when he lived "a year in an hour."

But a day will come on which the time seems to fly on doubly leaden wings, and such a one has to-day been.

The reason? Well, as Able Seaman Dodds observed when the bugle sounded the "cease fire"—meaning that coaling was over,—"nuff sed."

III.

Midnight, and again at sea: rough weather, too. Just as we were congratulating ourselves on at least one night in harbour the order came, "Steam for full speed"; ten o'clock saw us passing the boom, and now here we are—well away from the lee of the land, the ship staggering and rolling as she runs with the fury of the gale on her starboard beam.

Ours the eternal wandering and warfare of the sea.

It was at five, as we finished washing down, that out of the south-west came a puff of wind —then calm again; then another puff stronger than the first, and the flat leaden surface of the water quivered into life as each moment the wind blew harder, as puff became squall. The grey canopy of fog cleared as if by magic, and in the evening light we could just see — overhead the rolling grey chaos of the fast approaching storm, around us the peculiar misty contracted horizon of south-westerly weather. Now in the inky blackness through which the gale shrieks and whistles and groans, we are pushing our way—whither?

That was the question all of us asked, though

perhaps not in quite the same form. "What's the stunt?" Langton had said, for we were all certain that our hurried departure was not just an ordinary part of the day's work.

It was an evening of rumours, fantastic and otherwise. Unconsciously every one knew that *something* was in the wind: Bombard Heligoland? a "digging-out" (!) expedition? . . . None of the many individual guesses found favour with the crowd, and it was not till the powers that be let fall certain words—rendezvous—first fine morning—seaplanes—that any of us felt satisfied in our own minds as to what was on.

Over the next three days the curtain must fall. Early on the fifth morning we arrived back in harbour.

CHAPTER X.

CALM.

THIS war is responsible for a great many things, and as the days go on, so, undoubtedly, will its responsibility increase; which brings us to the subject of—beards. At all events, it must be perfectly safe to say that some of the whiskers which have lately made their appearance would never have done so in the piping times of peace.

But to call them beards in every case is to be unduly flattering, for most of the productions are decidedly disappointing. Dannatt has grown something which on a dark moonless night might perhaps be taken for one, while Saxon, after six weeks' strenuous effort, can show nothing for his labours but a very inferior "Kruger" fringe. *Could* were the more proper word to use, for a great event in his life has just taken place, and at the breakfast table he

appears again a more or less respectable member of society—the fringe is no more.

"Hello," says Langton, "so you've done your day's work already; did it hurt much? But seriously, old man, I offer you my heartfelt congratulations."

"I simply couldn't stand it any longer," explains Saxon.

"Well, it was not going to grow any longer," appropriately says Sinbad.

"Perhaps not, but anyway I had some ripping side-whiskers, hadn't I?"

And then some people say that men are not vain.

So much for the Ward-room; as regards the rest of the officers, most of the members of the gun-room are far too juvenile to have yet passed beyond the stage of rapturously conning the advertisements of safety-razors, in eager anticipation of the day when an immature downy fluff will have grown slightly more aggressive. Some, of course, have reached years of discretion, but the most that the gun-room sports (up to the present) is one very weedy pair of side-whiskers. The Warrant Officers on the whole are far too staid and unemotional to be influenced by the whims and caprices of the younger generation.

But on the lower deck a perfect forest of whiskers has sprung up, some of the effects being

good, some bad, but most indifferent. It is one of the rules of the service that before a man is allowed to "grow," he must first solicit the permission of the officer of his division—not as a curtailment to the liberty of the subject, but just to provide a slight check to the ardour of those who otherwise would be continually "growing" one week and shaving again the next.

It is not hard to guess the names of one or two culprits; "Nobby" Clark, of course, broke out very soon, and by now has a really fine beard; of which he has duly informed his wife, but apparently she does not view the production in at all the same light as he does. At least Langton got that idea from a letter he censored last night: "You say if ever I come home tickling you with a beard, you'll never speak to me again. Well, as the first chance of a drop of leaf seems to be after the war, I'll risk it."

Doubtless the rumour alone of forty-eight hours' leave would soon cause much delving in ditty boxes for discarded razors.

One good thing, the Marines, being soldiers, are not allowed to play pranks with their appearance, and so we are spared the sight into which Private Spooner would doubtless have turned himself; his moustache is recalcitrant enough without a beard adding to his troubles.

This is our second consecutive day in harbour. Yesterday we did the best coaling of the commission, taking in as much as usual and being finished and washed down by seven bells in the afternoon. To-day, Sunday, we are taking advantage of the apparent quietness of affairs in the outside world (which to us means — the North Sea) to have proper Sunday "Divisions" and "muster by open list."

"Divisions" is a great function in peace times. Now it is shorn of much of the accustomed pomp and ceremony. Gone are the officers' frock-coats, the clanking swords, the immaculate white gloves; of that first red week in August it might well be said, figuratively speaking, that for most naval officers all roads led to "Gieve's": the railways must have carried many hundreds of tons of gear to the outfitters for stowage till "after the war." The only error that we made then was in thinking that the time at which we have now arrived would belong to the mystical period which still seems so far distant.

It is twenty-five minutes past nine; from the bugle comes the "Officers' call," and on deck we troop to give the ward-room servants a last chance of tidying up, in case that autocrat—the Captain —should look in on his voyage of inspection of the ship.

This last frenzied tidying up for the Captain's benefit is rather comical—as regards the Officers' Mess, at least. Will he not know all too well when he pulls aside the curtain and sees a spick-and-span apartment, that a bare half-hour ago thirty or so individuals were breakfasting there; that, but for five minutes' grace between the "Officers' call" and "Divisions" itself, tobácco ash galore would be marring the polished surface of the shellaced corticene, that the whole place would be a litter of papers, charts, and all the paraphernalia which a N.O. must have immediately at hand; that if he were to open that bottom sideboard cupboard he would in all probability find a bucket of dirty water, stowed there (quite wrongly) by the corporal of servants who now stands so stiffly at attention by his side?

Of course he will; has he not lived in the ward-room for so many years of his life? and knowing, he will pass on, almost hearing the sigh of relief with which the corporal welcomes the fact that his delinquency has not been noticed.

"9.30, sir, ready for Divisions," the Commander reports to the Captain, and the latter heads the procession round the ship. The time-honoured routine is carried out: a tour of the mess decks, a peep into storerooms, the unearthing of the inevitable "cleaning rags" where they

should not be, &c., &c. Writing about it all perhaps seems futile, but experience shows that inspections such as this keeps things—particularly as regards minor generalities—up to concert pitch.

The Captain is spending a long time "below" to-day, and twenty minutes elapse before the procession appears on deck. Already, fallen in by hundreds, the men are standing to attention in one long queue of fours, the first rank facing a table over which Saxon leans, ship's ledger spread open before him.

"Carry on, sir?" asks the Commander.

"Please," answers the Captain, and without further ado Saxon starts the ball rolling.

"Petty Officer Tucker," he calls out.

"Number one, sir; Petty Officer, Gunner's Mate, Gunlayer 1st class, Three Good Conduct Badges." Tucker had stepped two paces forward and now stands, cap off and at attention, fearlessly looking his Captain between the eyes. As the last word is uttered, he turns smartly to the left, replaces his cap, and doubles away.

"Petty Officer Hayes."

"Number two, sir; Petty Officer, Leading Torpedoman, Two Good Conduct Badges."

And so the muster goes on; "Timothy Apps," says Saxon in a voice which by now sounds

purely mechanical in tone. Up sidles Stoker Apps and sheepishly blurts out "Stokeer, first-class, sirr, second class for conduct."

The Captain gazes on him. He is not a particularly nice sight—just a "worm," and with no extenuating circumstances. However, he passes the ordeal with nothing worse than an order for "hair cut" against his name in the Master-at-Arms' book.

Pauses occur here and there: the inevitable stutterers appear from time to time, covered with confusion; but the Captain has a kind heart, and taking pity on their affliction waves them aside long before they have had time to appear foolish to the remainder of the world behind them.

The R.N.R. men by now are initiated into most Service mysteries, and "muster by open list"—a much more trying ordeal than payment muster for the tyro—is negotiated swimmingly.

Evening comes, and six o'clock reveals a scene, the familiarity of which has robbed it of all incongruity for us. In a large flat just abaft the ward-room, extending the whole width of the ship, are assembled nearly two hundred men, some sitting, some standing, all smoking; tucked away in a corner is a musical instrument of some sort,

while a small clear space in the middle contains a table and a chair.

What are we going to have? A concert? A stranger would come to no other opinion, but—he would be wrong.

Minutes pass; the atmosphere becomes grey and thick with the fumes of Woodbines and "Ship's"; the chatter grows louder and louder; then of a sudden a hush falls over the assemblage, and on the scene enters the Rev. Charles Golightly.

He looks round, and half to himself, half to the crowd, observes, "Ah, a good muster to-night, this is better. . . . No, no, carry on smoking, please," he adds in a louder voice, as certain individuals who are making a first appearance furtively put pipe in pocket or cigarette behind an ear.

"Hymn No. 27." The musical instrument—which closer inspection reveals in its true colours, a harmonium—emits a few wheezy bars, and the service begins. It is not the proper Evensong—just a succession of hymns and talks by the Padre during an hour or so, but after all, just as effective, just as sincere.

CHAPTER XI.

CELEBRITIES.

Most ships have a pet of some sort—a cat, dog, goat, monkey, or even a bear; which brings to mind the good old Service bear story. That it is true is an absolute fact, as several officers can testify; but it is told of so many ships and so many different persons that the younger generation after a while rather take it with the proverbial grain.

Anyway, one ship had a big shaggy bear for a pet, and for a time all went well. "Bruin" (needless to say that was *not* his name) behaved with the utmost decorum and became quite a credit to his ship and the Service. As time went on, though, he began to tire of chasing the same old figures, whose idiosyncrasies he knew so well, up and down ladders—along the fore and aft bridge—through the battery—on to the quarter-deck—and back again, and he made up his mind

that fresh ships and decks new would be a pleasant change; so one day in harbour he quietly slipped down the ladder and swam over to the next astern. The consternation (and rather more than consternation, rumour had it!) of that ship's officer of the watch when he saw a soaking wet, ferocious bear making for him can well be imagined. "Bruin" quickly cleared the quarter-deck of all inhabitants, and remained cock of the walk, while the fore-bridge semaphore sent out a frenzied appeal to the —— for some one to come and remove their obstreperous property.

But we commissioned in such a whirl that pets were rather at a discount, and so have none; at least, none to ourselves. But with the rest of the ships that use this base we share two—"Fritz" and "Karl."

And either Fritz or Karl we always have with us, the one or the other, for they permanently keep watch and watch somewhere in the approaches to this anchorage. So by now you have probably guessed who or what they are—actually two enemy submarines, but we always think of them by the pet names we have given their commanding officers.

Fritz and Karl somehow we imagine as being rather sportsmen; rumour says that the former, having fruitlessly expended all his torpedoes,

once landed at an out-of-the-way part of the coast, played eighteen holes on the nearest golf course, and re-embarked to await Karl's arrival from Heligoland: while the latter on off-days is popularly supposed to play a bold game of "peep-bo" just to the seaward side of the boom —popping up his periscope now and then on the "cat may look at a king" theory.

Thus we have invested them with a fictitious glamour of romance, though viewed in cold blood the only opinion that can be formed is that they must be singularly inefficient. But we have quite taken them under our wing, and so long as they continue to expend German torpedoes without result we shall be almost sorry if any harm comes to them.

We would rather like to come to an agreement with Fritz and Karl—live and let live.

The present is quite a long spell in harbour, and thus we ourselves for the first time feel to be on more or less familiar terms with Fritz and Karl; up to the present we have only heard of their activities from friends in the harbour depôt ships, but now our own coding office confirms everything (except as regards the fantastic details) we were told.

"Are they really there?" Langton asks of

Saxon, who has just sat down to tea after having the afternoon coding watch.

"Oh yes, I think so," replies Saxon; then, inconsequently, "I wonder if Fritz has seen 'The Passing Show'?" And, as far as a mouthful of bread, butter, and jam will allow, he croons, "You're here and I'm here, so what do we care?"

Till one has been at anchor for a day or two, one hardly realises what a blessed relief a spell in harbour affords.

Continually at sea, our thoughts centre on a single subject—the enemy—and it is only natural that we seem to lose absolutely the true perspective of ordinary things. Cooped up as closely as we are, trivialities of at all an irksome nature are apt to become enormities, and outside one's work petty peculiarities of a messmate—at first not even noticed, then whimsically tolerated—now after a few days' bad weather seem absolutely abhorrent.

For instance, one gets to the stage of considering it a personal insult that one's *vis-à-vis* splutters whilst drinking his tea!

At times one takes a feverish delight in welcoming additional discomforts (which must be bad!), and a green sea down the ward-room

skylight, resulting in the mess for an hour or two being an absolute snipe-marsh, seems to be the best tonic going for a general "mouldy" atmosphere.

And the reason? Merely because so many people have to live in such a very restricted environment. Liver? Yes and no; but Dannatt, who neither by age nor rank is yet a S.O.B. ("silly old buffer" is a term of endearment applied to the senior members of the mess), is a great offender, and surely he ought to be able to prescribe for himself.

But a day or two in harbour quickly brush away the cobwebs, and in every possible way we make the most of them.

This evening Saxon, pausing for a moment just outside his cabin, has his ears assailed by the sound of a swinging chorus coming apparently from the bowels of the ship. After a week or so at sea probably he would have observed that "if those people want to make a blooming awful row, I wish they would not choose just outside my cabin to do it"; now he peers down the open trunk and listens with evident relish.

"Those people" are the Padre and his concert party.

It was more than a month ago that the fol-

lowing appeared on the lower deck notice-boards:—

It is proposed to form a concert party. Will any "talent" please come and have a yarn with me in the dog-watches during the next day or two?—The Chaplain.

The party rehearsing in the flat below is the result.

Running a ship's concert is no sinecure. Even after one has managed to separate the wheat from the chaff without offending more than half the ship's company, one's troubles only really begin. After having cast Stoker So-and-So for a song, one finds that although he originally reported (and fairly rightly too) as being "a good 'and at a comic," he now has no intention of performing in that line; it is sword-swinging or *nothing* for him.

But though a ship's concert party is as touchy as the most rabid Trade Unionist, the Rev. Charles Golightly has a happy knack of smoothing out all difficulties, and by now he has the nucleus of a successful evening's entertainment rehearsed and almost ready for production.

Whether—and if it is, when—it will be produced, fate will decide.

II.

There are two celebrities to whom you have not been introduced; presented, rather,—for one never is "introduced" to Royalty, is one? And they are, the Cocoa King and the Incinerator King; all powerful sovereigns in their own domains.

The former is really a King, *ex officio*, if there can be such a personage, for though his realm is the ship's galley, he is actually only there on sufferance. His forebears in the old days must have been the chiefs of some small predatory nation, for now he only appears in the hours of darkness. In fact he is a great example of the old adage, "Uneasy lies the head . . .," for his existence is a Jekyll and Hyde one in the extreme: he has never been seen during the day!

But mount the ladder and stroll into the precincts of the galley any time during the long night watches. There we shall find him hooded and cloaked in a duffle suit (some swear he wears a mask), now seated on a pile of potato sacks, a bowl of steaming cocoa at his lips, now standing suppliant at the galley door, beseeching the cook on watch for more.

Apparently he has solved two great questions of life—

(*a*) How to live without sleep.

(*b*) The art of perpetually taking nutriment.

But perhaps he is subsidised by Fry or Cadbury, or whoever purveys cocoa to His Majesty's Navy.

Anyway, as we try to impress on Dannatt, he deserves at least a column in the 'British Medical Journal.'

A very different personage is the Incinerator King. He reigns where all may see—and during the hours of official day only—right aft on the poop. His kingdom consists of a home-made contraption—cross between a travelling-kitchen and an armoured-car—for burning all refuse which otherwise would be thrown over the side, and thus be likely to betray a fleet's movements to observant mariners.

The Incinerator was designed and made "below," and is a source of more pride and self-congratulation on the part of the senior engineer than the whole of the turbines, engine-rooms, and boiler-rooms put together. If one but knew, he probably considers himself fully qualified now to put F.R.I.B.A. after his name.

The King, a venerable smoke-begrimed dignitary, when not referred to by his royal title, answers to the name of Donald Macpherson,

stoker, Royal Naval Reserve. In private life we are given to understand that he is a person of considerable importance in his native land of Stornoway; he owns at least one steam trawler that plies in and out of that port; from his venerable appearance when, gold spectacles on the point of his nose, he may be seen reading in his mess, he can be nothing less than an elder.

"What for did ye join the Reserve, Donal': you just awaistin' your time, tending yon —— moock daistructor?" asks Sandy M'Squinty, a fellow-countryman hailing from "Glesca"; though whether Stornoway owns a "Glescaite" as a fellow-countryman, and *vice versâ*, we Sassenachs of Sassenachs can hardly say.

"Hush, mon; d'ye ken your language. Is it no' a bonny callin'?"

"What? I doot if ye'll find mony men tae go daftie o'er rubbish burnin'."

"I didna mean rubbish burnin'; I meant the Sairvice," answers Macpherson.

"Aye, nae doot," M'Squinty acquiesces, realising in time the futility of entering into an argument with one so well read.

In the Ward-room a frequent topic of conversation is not "What for did we join the Sairvice?" but what we are going to do after the war. For a lot of us now are determined when peace comes

once more to seek a new life (of course when the time does come we shall do no such thing!).

To-day, after breakfast, a small group are putting the finishing touches to a discussion which raged with varying success all last evening after dinner.

"Much as I hate the sea," says Sinbad (actually away from it for more than a week on end he would be supremely unhappy), "it's back to the old job for me. I know Sierra Leone too much, sah," he adds, dropping into nigger idiom; "and won't I kick those swine of Hamburgers if the old line sails out of there once more!"

"Six months' leave for me," Sandall contributes, "and a winter at Palm Beach." "Torps" is a voracious novel reader, and lately has been much enamoured with an American story by R. W. Chambers: rumour says that he has lost his heart (in the abstract) to a girl called Sheila.

Here Saxon propounds his theory. "No, *the* thing to do is to start a pub. Oh, not the every-day sort of thing," he adds, noticing the look of mock dismay on his audience's faces: "A real old-world first-class hotel. You can all have jobs. Dannatt will be in the wine cellar. . . ."

"Then I stipulate that I'm provided with a skull-cup and red plush slippers," interposes that worthy.

Unabashed, Saxon continues: "It must have a huge garden, be near a golf course, and just

off an important road, have a trout stream handy, and be well run on real old-world lines."

"Yes," says Langton, warming up to the idea, "I'll join in; and we'll have no men about the place—inside, that is: all maids with old-fashioned names."

"Penelope," supplements Terence.

"And Prudence."

"And Phœbe."

"And we'll keep bees, too; in those old-fashioned hives, you know."

The idea is catching on like wildfire.

"That's all very well," says Wilson, who has joined up on the outskirts of the throng. "But who's got the money to start all this going?"

"What! with our prize-money and blood-money, shan't we have enough?" asks Saxon.

"Wait and see," says Wilson, dull and prosaic as ever.

"Never mind old Rechid Pasha," says Saxon. "He'd be a wet blanket to . . ."

"The Huns are out, chaps!" Martin's face, wreathed with smiles of excitement, is thrust round the door curtain just long enough for him to utter these words.

And they are, too, or at least some of them.

As "the Yarmouth raid" that day's exploit of the Germans goes down to history. It was not a

very glorious episode in the annals of their navy, but it was an annoying one for us, because we failed to come to grips with them. True, their 10,000-ton cruisers engaged our 1000-ton gunboat *Halcyon*, and wounded one man, before they deemed it advisable to retire back to their fastnesses!

Needless to say, the other battle cruisers and ourselves, with the light cruisers, were after them as soon as we could possibly get away. But when the first excitement of the news had died down, we seemed to feel that we were on somewhat of a wild-goose chase; they had such an impossible start of us.

But off at full speed we all pounded into the face of typical North Sea weather — dull, rainy, and rough; as we feared, though, disappointment was to be our fate, and early in the evening we were ordered back to harbour.

An unfortunate incident of the affair was that one of our submarines, in trying to make a "bag," struck a mine—one of a stream which the rearmost German ship was sowing as she fled—and sank.

"Yon dirrty dogs," was Macpherson's sole remark on the whole exploit. But that was unduly expressive for him.

CHAPTER XII.

MISCELLANEA.

So, yesterday, ended our shortest trip of the war—and the most disappointing one. To-day in the Ward-room we are feeling distinctly "piano," and the elements are doing their level best to be sympathetic, for fog—thick, damp, cheerless, and depressing—reigns everywhere.

But evening brings a change in the general outlook—inside the ship, that is; outside the grey weather grows thicker if anything—for beside the fact that we are invited to dinner in the Gun-room (always a superlatively cheery function), we have just received an addition to our numbers in the person of Lieutenant "Johnny" Maxwell, who joined this afternoon, and is now regaling us with news of the outside world.

"My dear old bird," he is saying to Langton (Maxwell is one of those people who seem to know every one, and whom every one seems to know), "you can grouse as much as you like

about the life on board, but I'll bet you'd jolly soon get fed up with being ashore for more than a day or two. The last seven days have been the most ghastly ones in my life; I was in barracks," he adds as an afterthought, "and the whole atmosphere was appalling."

"Anyway," he proceeds, "you know the good old Naval Barracks 'mould,' don't you? every one just passing through—some staying a day, some a fortnight perhaps; and how the Staff congregate at one end of the smoking-room and glare at any 'passenger' who dares to encroach on what they regard as their preserves."

"Yes," from another voice, "and you have your meals in a universal stony silence; nobody wants to know you, and you yourself only too heartily reciprocate the wishes of the mob."

"But surely the war has killed all that, hasn't it?" Langton asks.

"Go and see, my son; go and see. I've been. *Veni, Vidi*—but I was blooming well conquered," Maxwell replies.

"What's London like?" asks Saxon; "I suppose you managed to just look at it somehow."

"Yes, I put in one evening up there—in plain clothes, too. I've kept the white feathers that were presented me, three I think it was; two from old dames who really ought to have known

better, and one from a perfectly charming piece of goods. But she fled before I could proceed to the attack and better acquaintanceship. Then, of course, at the Empire the inevitable happened."

"What?" from Dannatt.

"They didn't want to lose me, but they thought I ought to go."

"Oh," Maxwell continues, "I expect you know that the Navy—or what most people imagine to be the Navy—is getting a thoroughly bad name in town."

"Why?" comes in chorus.

"Well, you see, a small minority of the people in London, wearing what looks like naval uniform, apparently belong to the old peace-time 'nut' tribe, and one of their rules must be that driving powerful cars at an excessive speed, and generally getting themselves, and indirectly the Service, disliked, is *it;* and they, to the dear old look-no-farther-than-your-nose British Public, represent *you*, who, I suppose, have stepped on dry land about once since the war started. 'Tis ever thus, though," he concludes with a sigh.

"But let's hear something about yourselves," he continues. "What's the latest thing now? Seen any Zepps yet?"

"No," Langton replies, "but we had a Zepp

'panic' a night or two ago. Suddenly got a wireless to say that a raid was in the offing—'momentarily expected,' in fact. But except that Miss X.'s crew had to man her the whole night, that was all that came off."

"Miss X.? . . . What do you mean?"

"Oh, of course you don't know who she is, do you? but you'll see her to-morrow—our No. 1 piecee high-angle gun, warranted to bring down the moon in four rounds."

"But why in the name of fortune do you call it Miss X.?" asks Maxwell, still mystified.

"*It*, sir! kindly never refer to our only pet as 'it.' *She* is fixed up just under the lee of X. turret, and as the text-books and gunners' mates say, hence the name."

"Well, personally, my opinion is that, whether you have a high-angle gun on board or not is all a matter of fancy waistcoats. I don't believe you'd ever do anything with one when the time came; the whole show is . . ."

"Steady, old bird, steady; with some h.-a. guns your remarks might be true, but with our Miss Gibbs—X., I beg her pardon—all things are possible," Langton retorts.

"Now that you've started talking hot air, it's time for me to depart," and Maxwell gets up and makes for the door.

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"And make yourself as pretty as possible," Langton shouts after him; "we're all dining in the Gun-room to-night."

A faint "right-o" comes from the distance.

It is hard at times to write about naval life, because one can never realise how much the outside world knows about us—how many service terms, nicknames, and gadgets (as we say in our own parlance) are understood by the general public, and it must be distinctly annoying to read a passage which only evokes a mental query—"But what is a 'snotty'? What is so-and-so?" For beside the fact that so many proper naval terms are only dimly understood, as is but natural, we seem to have a large dictionary of slang of our own, and almost a special language too.

Does the average civilian know that to us he is a "beach-loafer"; that when he talks about our "going ashore in *mufti*" he absolutely grates on our nerves (*mufti* to us is "plain clothes," though from a marine servant you would cull another word, "civvies"); that to hear a twenty-thousand or more ton man-of-war spoken of as a "boat" is anathema; that we live *in* our ships and not *on* them? Does the "beach-loafer" live on his house roof? No! and nor do we.

Then the Ward-room and Gun-room are the proper names of the two main officers' messes: "Guns," "Torps," and "Pilot" are self-explanatory, the Gunnery, Torpedo, and Navigating Officers; the "Indiarubber man" or "Bunje" is the officer borne for physical training duties; "Number one" is the first lieutenant; "Soldier," the subaltern of marines; "Snotties" are the midshipmen—and so on. Every officer has his nickname—two in fact, for the men produce quite different ones to those the officers use among themselves. Then the forest of "terms of endearment" employed on the lower deck is wellnigh impenetrable: "Jawnty" stands for the master-at-arms (the rest of his staff—the ship's police in general—are "Crushers"); "Dusty-boy" is the ship's steward's assistant; "Tankey" the captain of the hold; while the marines answer to either "Jollies," "Leather-necks," or "Bashi-bazouks." A seagull to the "matloe" is a "crow in white working rig," conversely a crow or rook is spoken of as a "gull in night clothing." Our lifelong enemy—the sea—is contemptuously termed "the ditch," and were we eventually to find a watery grave our friends would merely say that we had been "scuppered."

Thus we can but guess that our life is rather

a closed book to most people; and certainly the peace-time query of the gushing young thing on being shown round a ship, "Oh, Mr A., have you ever been in a torpedo?" pointed that way.

Through trading on this assumption, though, one dear little midshipman rather put his foot in it when he gave most impossible explanations of all the items of interest to a benevolent white-haired old gentleman, whom in those far-off days he had been detailed to show round. The visitor seemed very interested in everything that was pointed out (and explained!) to him, but on leaving took the wind out of his youthful guide's sails by presenting his card, which read:—

ADMIRAL SIR CHARLES HARDCASTLE,
(RETIRED).

999 PARK LANE, W. U.S. CLUB.

and remarking, "Thank you very much; I've been most entertained by all you have told me."

But whether the "snotty" felt more flabbergasted than the debonair lieutenant on whom a worthy old dame pressed half-a-crown is an open question.

Yet in spite of our knowledge of the fond mother who asked her young hopeful on his first leave if "that horrid gun didn't get awfully in the way in the mess," we feel certain that it is generally know that the Gun-room forms the home of the younger officers—"one-stripers" (the Sub., Engineer Sub. and Assistant Paymaster of less than four years seniority) and subordinate officers (midshipmen—termed "the young gentlemen" by the Admiralty and their distant seniors, "snotties" by the naval world in general, clerks and assistant clerks). And it is with the twenty or so members of the Gun-room that we of the Ward-room are spending the evening.

Our Gun-room is a peculiarly juvenile one, for most of the "snotties" when the war broke out were only finishing their second term at Dartmouth, and so in the ordinary course of events would not have been midshipmen for another two years; now here they are, swash-buckling battle-stained warriors of some fifteen to sixteen summers.

Langton, of course, knew them all at Osborne; they were in their fifth term when he joined as officer of the new first, and so he is always singled out for special attention. Hero-worship is almost a fetish with the young gentlemen, and

not one of them has forgotten that "six" of his which landed on the Osborne canteen roof, to the dire terror of Mr Glimmer (in charge of the establishment) and the various cadets engaged in stuffing themselves with "pink-ones," "mouldies" (so very different from the "mouldy" they now know), and suchlike *vinos y comida;* or in the next term that wonderful "try" which, unconverted as it was, changed a defeat by 13 points to 11 into a victory by 14 to 13.

Yes, though war has altered the perspective of most things, the peace-time achievements of our youthful warriors' heroes still have their niche.

The Navy is a wonderful school, and nothing could better portray this than to-night's little function. Observe Mr Barclay (*ætat.* 15¾), who has been detailed as host to the Engineer Commander (*ætat.* 47, but jovial withal); is he shy or embarrassed? One might reasonably expect such to be the case. But no, rather not; and the roars of laughter that follow each story and anecdote with which youth and middle-age are entertaining one another show that both of them are thoroughly enjoying themselves.

The meal progresses with (for the Gun-room) unwonted decorum; then after dinner comes the

real *pièce de résistance*—a "sing-song." And Gun-room sing-songs teem with possibilities; how they may end is a matter beyond conjecture: sometimes as they begin, quite staid affairs, but generally in a real rough-and-tumble scrap and scrum—in a general "rough house." And who more in his element than Sinbad?

To-night is no exception. Proceedings open smoothly enough, and for an hour or so we make ourselves hoarse with rollicking choruses. The Huns at Kiel must have almost heard, and shivered in their shoes at our,

"We'll rant and we'll roar like true British sailors."

Then a bright spark conceives an idea which has hardly to be whispered to be put into execution. During a temporary lull a cry goes up from somewhere, "Dogs-of-war, out gilded staff!" (the Admiral's staff was included in our invitation); comes a whirlwind of small forms, a flurry of gold lace and aigulettes, and in the twinkling of an eye the deed is accomplished. The dogs-of-war (sundry selected junior midshipmen, or "warts" to give them their Gun-room title) have speedily ejected their quarry—the Secretary and Flag-Lieutenant.

That sets the ball rolling, and during the next half-hour many strange sights may be seen: old

gentlemen, head down in the scrum, "packing" with gnome-like figures, pushing and shoving for all they are worth, while with a shout of "coming in right, our side," a bald-headed individual (International as far back as '02) somehow contrives to get the ball (is it necessary to say that this is an inflated swimming-collar?) into the scrum.

Some one will be minus his life-saving apparatus to-morrow!

So the game goes on; the staggering *mêlée* rocks and sways from one end of the mess to the other, and the fact that the ball has been "out" for some time matters not at all. Then, seeing signs of an impending break-up, bald-head shouts "Wheel!" The trick is done, but not according to the teaching of any rugger expert, for on the deck reposes a panting, writhing mass of fevered humanity—one deep on the outskirts, two further in, while how the bottom layer in the heaped-up centre remains alive is simply inexplicable.

Gradually we sort ourselves out—some rubbing a shin, some an elbow, everybody rubbing some part of his anatomy,—retire to regain our breath, and prepare for the next bout.

But a prolonged course of this is beyond human endurance, and one by one we make our

adieux. With a mental note of, "By Jove! I *shall* be stiff to-morrow," we seek our bunks.

So finishes another day of the war; children you may well call us, but after all we enjoy it, and for the space of an hour or so we forget. That, at least, is something.

CHAPTER XIII.

"OFFICIAL CORRESPONDENCE, RULES AND REGULATIONS FOR."

We gather from our friends in the New Army that the Service official phraseology (as regards paper work) causes them much amusement. As a young transport officer attached to a medical unit wrote in a letter to Martin: "Why the deuce, when I want some buckets for a water-cart, should I have to make out an 'indent' (in triplicate) for 'carts, water, buckets for, pattern No. 120a, 4 in No.'?" We, however, are so accustomed to all this — with the familiarity which merely breeds contempt—that it becomes second nature to the "Pilot," when requiring a new sounding-machine, to make out a requisition for "machines, sounding, Kelvin's, mark a million and one"; but supposing if, on leave (impossible!), and desirous of buying a spokeshave, we went to the "monger, iron," and asked for a "shave,

spoke," the look of consternation on the face of the man behind the counter can be easily pictured. Yet the carpenter, requiring such an article for use on board, must needs apply (in triplicate) for "shaves, spoke, boxwood, brass-plated, &c."

We know, too, that any communication or request we may desire to make to the "higher authority" must pass through the "proper service channels"; also we soon realise that the wheels of the proper service channels at times grind slowly, and accept this fact as all part of the day's work; though the subject apparently inspired Sinbad to rush into print, for he is the culprit who has just submitted to the editors of 'Flap!' a skit under the title which this chapter has stolen from him for its own. But surely he was wrong, even then, for undoubtedly the correct wording should have been, "Correspondence, official, Rules and regulations for." There is one delightful thing about our "King's Regulations and Admiralty Instructions": to pry into the index as a help towards finding an article one may wish to consult is just like a dip in the lucky-bag—"you pays your money and you takes your choice." But there the matter ends.

In a big ship the Captain generally has a junior Accountant Officer as his clerk, and the latter,

who invariably carries an ink-stained forefinger as badge of office, does his work in the Captain's office. Flagships (like ourselves) also possess an Admiral's office, wherein the Secretary's staff perform, and from whence, under the Admiral's signature, come all the squadron's orders—in fact, the paper work of the fleet.

Thus it can be seen that intercommunication between the Admiral's and Captain's offices must be constant—by boat (the "duty steam-boat," or the D.S.B. as it is called) from the other ships, direct (at least one would think so) by ourselves.

But, according to Sinbad, the great thing to avoid, even should the two offices be next door to one another, is any absolutely direct communication. It might facilitate the work and get things pushed through so much quicker! But he would be a bold man who dared to walk those few intervening yards from door to door with the idea of settling some matter off-hand. It *would* cause a flutter in the dovecot. Perhaps here, in Sinbad's favour, it should be mentioned that he was only referring to minor details; it is but fair to say that red-tape with us since the war began is a thing unknown in the greater questions of the day.

He framed his code of rules on the vicissi-

tudes which a simple little letter of his suffered before it obtained recognition by "My Lords" at the Admiralty. Some weeks ago, after much mental effort, great physical labour (Sinbad's writing is noted for its illegibility), and the expenditure of several sheets of the Fleet Paymaster's foolscap, he managed to pen the following:—

H.M.S. "——,"
— *September* 1914.

SIR,—I have the honour to submit that my name may be forwarded to the Admiralty as a volunteer for appointment to duty in patrol ships. —I have the honour to be, Sir, your obedient servant,

G. H. MARKS,
Lieutenant, R.N.R.

THE CAPTAIN,
H.M.S. "——."

It was the work of a minute to drop this into the Captain's office, and then, so thought Sinbad, it would need but a day or two for it to be in My Lords' hands.

But (so he tells us in his literary gem) a very different routine was carried out. Two days elapsed, and Mr Garfield, the Captain's clerk, approached him with, "About that letter of yours, sir; I'll have it typed out for you, because it must go in in duplicate, and it looks so much better typed, doesn't it?"

"Oh, all right, but you might ginger it up a bit; I'd like it to get in as soon as possible."

That evening Sinbad signed the typewritten version (in duplicate).

Then for two days it reposed in a beautiful white wicker basket, labelled "unexecuted"; on the third morning, adorned with the imprint of an oval rubber stamp (giving the ship's name and date), it was laid before the Captain. Quickly he read it, neatly initialled in the centre of the stamp, and remarking, "Right, send it along, though I shall be very sorry to lose Marks," added it to the top of the pile of papers he had already signed.

Another day it spent in the basket, and then made its second appearance in the limelight with Minute 1. added to it—just a plain—

1.

REAR-ADMIRAL COMMANDING.

Submitted.

H.M.S. "——," *Captain.*
— *October* 1914.

This was duly signed, and after a further day's sojourn (in a different basket this time), the missive was taken *by messenger* to the Admiral's office. From there, for a change, it was given a

speedy exit, but with a circular stamp and Minute II. on it :—

II.

H.M.S. "——."

Attention is called to Article 595, King's Regulations and Admiralty Instructions, which is to be complied with.

H.M.S. "——," *Rear-Admiral.*
— *October* 1914.

A sad blow, thought Mr Garfield, as he pressed the oval stamp on it; he knew all too well that the Captain would probably give him a nasty rap over the knuckles for his omission, and so, to put off the evil hour, Sinbad's letter for two more days reposed in its old "unexecuted" home.

Then with Minute III. (supplying the missing information) added, it again appeared (judiciously placed among a pile of everyday routine documents) before the Captain, and joy of joys (to Mr Garfield), the great man signed it all unconsciously—seemingly not having realised his clerk's delinquency.

Its next trip was by messenger to the Admiral's office, where it was duly stamped, had a further minute bearing the Rear-Admiral's signature

added, and finally—so very long after its birth—it left for the Admiralty.

Its fate there is unknown, though the weary basket sojourn is easy to imagine; at last the reply—a brief message to say that "Lieutenant G. H. Marks' request is noted"—left for the "———."

That is Sinbad's version; but one need have no doubt that it is really an absolute libel. For, as a matter of fact, we are all filled with admiration at the smoothness, speed, and lack of red tape with which that stupendous complex machine of naval organisation—down to the very smallest details—works.

CHAPTER XIV.

RETROSPECTIVE.

NOVEMBER the fifth has had a permanent niche in history ever since our old friend Guy Fawkes made his dramatic but short-lived entry upon the world's stage over three centuries ago. Now it will have a further claim to fame, and "Whittaker" of the future will doubtless show against it the entry, "England declared war against Turkey 1914"; yet for all of us "The Fifth of November"—so dearly beloved of our childhood's days—will probably be remembered for another reason altogether. We shall look back upon it as the virtual birthday of a new and striking phase in our Great Adventure.

But of that, more anon.

Three months have passed since that August morning which set our hearts beating with hope and expectation, and they have turned out to be three months of—what? Monotony, one might

almost say, disappointment certainly, for brother Boche seems disinclined to seek "the Day" which he so boldly toasted when it was but a mere chimera. But we do not despise him for all that, nor do we relax one whit our watchfulness; we know that he is waiting for a chance to catch us napping, a chance to meet us—or rather a part of us—on equal terms. Do we blame him? No; is not it his only game?

We do not talk of him as "skulking in his harbours" or as "the High Canal Fleet"; a section of the press do that all too efficiently, in the same way that a small section of the British Public apparently persist in demanding, "What is the Navy doing?" But we possess real ducks' backs, for we realise that these creatures would otherwise be heralding abroad in their pet halfpenny dailies the cutting of a "giant marrow," or whatever "frightfulness" they used to perpetrate annually in late summer and autumn.

Yet the time has simply flown; naturally perhaps, for undoubtedly these last three months have been the busiest and most strenuous ones of our lives.

But if they have been strenuous and nerve-racking for us, what have they been for the army? Words cannot meet the case. We are simply filled with admiration that is beyond ex-

pression for our brothers of the sister service, and we know (it is a pleasant thought, too) that they never have a doubt as to what we are doing. Good old army!

Little of the routine of our lives has materially altered during these three months; perhaps on the whole we have a slightly easier time now than was our lot in the first few weeks of the war—simply working on the theory that you do not flog a dead horse; but the amount of sea time put in is ever the same, the maximum; and that is what we all wish. Experience on many points we have certainly gained—valuable experience, as doubtless have the Germans too; and of course the outstanding feature of the last six weeks has been the gradual development on a gigantic scale of the enemy's submarine campaign. But if striking terror into our hearts was one of their aims, one can but say that they have signally failed.

We have seen summer pass into winter, though perhaps some may cavil at calling early November winter; however, we in the North Sea are quite unanimous on the subject. Yet that makes very little difference to the trivial round; the daily routine is automatically adjusted to meet the lengthening hours of darkness. Winter merely makes the universal work harder and more trying,

merely deprives us of the comfort which warmth and calm seas engender.

Undoubtedly, though, the only "moan" of the Grand Fleet in general is that so few of them up to the present have had a run for their money; and there we must consider ourselves lucky, for we have met the enemy once, though not in such force as to put us properly on our mettle.

As regards our inner, intimate life, we know and understand each other perfectly now. It always seems to be a source of wonderment to outsiders how we manage—after a time—to avoid, metaphorically speaking, treading on one another's toes. Yet, except in odd flashes of spleen (and they generally occur at breakfast time!), we do. Perhaps it is because we get to know each other's pet fancies, whims, and foibles so well, that unless one feels peculiarly agressive for a moment we frame our general conduct on the system of "live and let live." It is the only way in a ship, and the formation of cliques simply cannot be tolerated.

So long as one possesses a sense of humour, hardly a day passes without some little incident warranted to bring a smile to the most toil-worn face; even if it be only such a small thing as happened the other night at dinner in the Ward-room. The Padre was away when we sat down,

and the President, unaware of the fact, tapped the table and waited for the reverend gentleman's customary grace. This not being forthcoming, he looked round, and then, almost in one breath, and quite unconsciously, said, "What, no parson—Thank God."

Now, too, we are better able to while away any leisure minutes we have in the dog-watches or in the "first" before turning in. Among the flood of presents with which we have been so generously inundated, games, gramophones, and records have figured largely of late (and that fact alone shows us in what a meagre minority the shore-going "croakers" live).

Pass along the mess deck any evening about six o'clock, and from old stagers to selections from the latest revues you will hear (provided the elements are being moderately kind) almost anything in the musical line. While Stoker Gibbons listens with rapt attention to Caruso's *La donna é mobile* (it is astonishing how popular grand opera is among the men; perhaps the Mediterranean Station and Malta Opera House may account for this), Private Spooner in the Marines' mess just across the deck helps Basil Hallam out with *Gilbert the Filbert*. . . . Further on, among the R.N.R. men, Harry Lauder is responsible for the smiles which wreathe alike

the countenances of the Incinerator King and Sandy M'Squinty.

We even have the new recruiting songs on the "juice-box," as the "matloe" calls the gramophone, and we wonder if, when the time comes, the copious promises contained in them for the future will be redeemed. If they are not, no backwardness on our part will have helped them to become scraps of paper; on that point all concerned may rest assured—and take warning.

In fact, it is only when some little thing crops up, showing that we have rather lost touch with the outside world, that we realise how absolutely isolated and cut off from things in general we are.

"I do hope you are keeping fit, it must be very hard cooped up on board," is a frequent expression in letters from home. Yet it is quite simple, though some of us are beginning to wonder whether, if the war lasts as long as people predict, nature will step in and provide us with web feet. Deck hockey, with old walking-sticks and blocks of wood, affords as strenuous exercise as the most energetic person can desire. Then with medicine-ball, skipping, &c., there are many ways in which the younger generation can retain their form, and the older brigade check any undue tendency to *embonpoint*. For the men a certain amount of compulsory exercise is decreed

every day (weather permitting) in the form of "doubling round" and "Swedish"; on their own initiative, several private "doubling" parties have sprung up, and the reason why these daily become more popular, perhaps, may be found in the fact that they afford an opportunity for sporting various multicoloured footer shirts and jerseys —provide another chance for indulging in that delight of the "matloe's" heart, dressing up.

Of course one always stands the chance of a 4-inch inconveniently going off just over one's head should a submarine put in an appearance, but that only adds to the gaiety of affairs.

On the whole, with presents and articles bought from the canteen funds, we are well provided with the means of making the very best of the situation; and the public seem to think of everything, even down to swelling the mails of those whose correspondence is somewhat scanty. But who in our Ward-room claims to be a "really lonely Naval Officer" perhaps had better remain a secret!

We gather that the motto on shore now is, "Business as usual." As regards ourselves—

> "We've gotter motter,
> Always merry and bright."

To return to this special November the Fifth of our own.

This morning we heard of the four days' old Coronel action. Everything was very vague, and all the news we had on the subject started, "It is reported," but there seemed little room to doubt that the *Good Hope* and *Monmouth* were lost—that a gallant Admiral and his crews were no more. "Ashore and on fire" was the first description of the *Good Hope's* fate, and for a space we held out hopes that some of her ship's company might have been saved, but time soon dashed them to the ground. There seemed to be a good deal of uncertainty about the *Glasgow*, too; but we gathered, as was correct, that though injured she had managed to escape from the heavy odds against her.

So the morning of November 5, as regards naval news, was not a very bright one.

And all this, though for the minute we knew it not, was to have a far-reaching effect on our future. As early as ten that forenoon an indescribable air of uncertainty seemed to pervade our whole atmosphere. In the Admiral's quarters all was hurry and bustle, and when it became generally known that a frenzied "packing-up" was taking place in the Secretary's office, we began to put two and two together.

We were right; before noon we had hauled down the flag. For the nonce we became a

private ship. Why? Well . . . that was the second half of the conundrum.

The afternoon passes and still we have no definite news. The powers that be know, of course; we can only guess. But soon the half-solved riddle is answered for us by a wireless from the Admiralty, which is posted on all the notice-boards:

You will proceed to the Tropics.

Visions of "whites," helmets, and tropical gear in general float before our eyes. Have we got them? No, everything of that sort landed three months ago. Shall we have time to get them? *Quien sabe?* Perhaps, for the Admiralty doubtless sent that message for a purpose, not merely to satisfy our curiosity.

Darkness. We have just passed the boom. Already the North Sea is rocking us in a farewell embrace. Is it *Adios*, or *Hasta la vista?*

CHAPTER XV.

JUNKET AND CREAM.

A GIGGLE—, a titter—, and the two maids of Devon passed by, but not so quickly as to prevent Dannatt catching the remark, "Y'er-r-e, Soosan, properr ole man o' the sea, beaint ee, wi' thicky li'l' bear-r-d?"

Yes, we, or as many of us as possible, are ashore again, "down along west countree"—strangers in a strange land, for "Guz" (as the "matloe" calls Devonport, in the same way that Portsmouth is "Pompey" and Chatham "Chats") is not our "home port." To the officers, cosmopolitan ever where places are concerned, this is a matter of small import; they realise that few, if any, will have a chance of seeing their friends or relations during our brief stay, so their motto for the short hours they can manage to get ashore is, "Eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we . . ." Well, we hardly know what to-morrow does contain. But to those of the men who had hoped

against hope that we might put into their own special little bit of England, it is rather a disappointment.

But War is War, though we all of us at times try to appear supremely indifferent to it; a rather amusing cult, this, for we neither take in ourselves nor any one else.

It was just before we sailed on that momentous evening of a few days ago that a friend in another ship, hearing of our impending departure, came over to see Langton and wish him God-speed.

"I'd like to be going with you to Devonport, my son, it's a dead snip you put in there I should think," he had remarked.

"Perhaps," was Langton's reply; "but what's the good of that? you can't do the trip afterwards with us."

"I only meant for a day or two's leave. I live at Plymouth, you know."

"But in those two or three days you might miss something in the North Sea," Langton had retorted.

"Oh, this war business, I suppose you mean!" And the tone of quasi-disdain was practically inimitable.

Actually though, wild horses—unless they had spelt "duty"—would not have dragged the speaker from his ship.

Yesterday morning brought us in view of our

goal (we are to have a chance to get those whites), and gradually the well-known sights opened up before our eyes—the Eddystone, Cornwall's cliffs, Staddon heights, the breakwater protecting the historic Plymouth Sound, Drake's Island, the Hoe from which the Elizabethan hero's statue untiringly sweeps the Channel through storm and sunshine, and all the spots which stir so deeply the hearts of those who hail from Cornwall or "Red Devon by the Sea"; that they leave us comparatively cold except for the fact that they mean life and civilisation, is, alas! our misfortune.

Then of a sudden down came a thick curtain of fog to upset all our arrangements. Truly annoying, for these admitted of as little delay as possible; Whitehall's orders were brief and to the point, and behind them all lurked the one word—Speed. We were to be off again as quickly as the necessary arrangements and work connected with our special mission would allow.

However, it only meant missing one tide, as later in the day the fog cleared, and evening saw us breasting the Hamoaze on our way into dock. And during this little trip we lost an old though untried friend, for we stopped under one of the cranes which quickly hoisted out, bag and baggage, "Miss X." Zepps and rumours of Zepps had

become for us, temporarily at all events, things of the past, so "Miss X."—as "Miss Somebody else" doubtless—was to be transferred to fields of activity elsewhere.

Soon we were in dock, and quickly became the subject for a similar scene to that enacted in those far-off early days of our commission. Hardly were the gangways placed when a crowd of "demons"—identical, save for the soft "burr" of their speech, to those who had made life unbearable for us then—flocked on board, fully armed with every tool and device required for their nefarious work. As ants invade the bees' domain, so was our hive invaded; but here, as before, the simile breaks down on one point, for the ants' invasion is always a punitive one, while this sudden influx of a crowd of dockyardmen was for our benefit; and short though our stay was to be, when we sailed again many of the defects that inevitably develop under general steaming conditions would have been made good.

By midnight we were shored up and on dry land, and in the light of gigantic flares the work of scraping—preparatory to painting—our bottom plating was well under way.

To Private Spooner (who surely must be gifted with somewhat of an artistic temperament) the sight of the flares from the dock-side brought

back memories of his native London. "'Ere, Bill," he shouted to a "townie" leaning against the poop-rails, "reminds yew of Vox'all Bridge Road and the cawfee stalls, not 'arf."

"Oo are yer gettin' at?" was the disdainful reply of the individual addressed. Evidently he was not possessed with the happy faculty of seeing beauty in ugliness.

Unabashed, Spooner continued his train of thought. "'I, matey," he bellowed down into the lurid depths, "give us a nice 'ot cup o' cawfee, please, . . . and keep the change." Then after a pause he added, addressing an imaginary customer on his right, and evidently mimicking a quondam stall-keeper friend of his, "and if yew ain't a-goin' ter buy nuffink, marm, take the bloomin' baby off the cahnter."

But all Spooner's byplay was lost on those below; a ceaseless hammer, hammer—chip, chip—scrape, scrape, effectually drowned for them all sounds from the world above.

Speed truly was our watchword, for, beside the feverish pace at which things progressed, the very work in hand was for the purpose of giving us the full benefit of the last ounce of power that the engines below can develop, for every one knows that a foul bottom even in the slightest degree at once decreases a ship's speed.

Now here we are—or as has been said, some of us—on our second evening at Devonport, ashore and bent on making the most of our time.

When one comes to look at it, it is rather marvellous that we are ashore, for the amount of work to be got through on board is colossal: stores and provisions to be taken in to almost unheard-of limits; ammunition likewise; as besides our own requirements we are shipping a liberal allowance of everything for our consorts to be, "down south." Work, work, . . . and then again more work, and the whole campaign is a fevered race against time, for the date and hour of our departure, though the powers that be alone know them, are fixed—and for not so very far ahead, either.

At a quarter to four came the pipe, "Liberty men to clean," and the watch allowed ashore needed no second bidding. In the next half-hour many an embryo beard, retained till the last minute in case "leaf" should not be given, went by the board; from the depths, untouched for over three months now, of innumerable bags were unearthed a brand-new jumper and that relic of peace time—the pair of trousers with the extra wide leg and accentuated "bell" at the bottom. Although we have been cut off from the world in general for so long, we are going to look

our best and smartest; otherwise how can the youthful "bloods" win the approval of the winsome west country lasses? Soon we were fallen in on the jetty, and then, inspection by the officer of the watch over, came the final orders in the loud voice of the master-at-arms, "Leave expires at midnight, ship under sailing orders. Right turn! By the right, quick march!"

So, while the work on board still goes on at reduced speed, we are to gain a few hours' respite in which to enjoy ourselves. That we shall do so goes without saying, and we have no pity for our brothers left in the ship; it will be our turn on board to-morrow night!

Needless to say, the officers are taking advantage of the occasion also, and in twos and threes all who can be spared make off "to the beach." Langton, Dannatt, and Saxon had strolled down the gangway an hour or so after the liberty men's departure, and now here they are, having just stepped off a tram, rounding the corner into that street which has two landmarks for naval officers —a clock tower at the western end, and at the eastern . . . well, if it had not the word "Restaurant" tacked on to its name, a stranger to these parts might take it for the Plymouth office of an old-established London evening paper.

It was at this point in our party's journeyings that Dannatt's appearance was too much for a

pair of rosy-cheeked daughters of Devon, and to his credit let it be said, he blushed.

Saxon, who feigns to forget his misdemeanour in the beard line, improves on the occasion. "I told you so," he says in mock derision; "I knew what would happen if I went ashore with a guy like you. If it weren't for your somewhat opulent appearance" (Dannatt has the bearing of a "city magnate," and enhances it by affecting a pretty taste in cigars), "I should have to ask you, firmly but courteously, to walk at a discreet distance behind, and generally look as if you did not belong to us."

"No more of your cheek, my little man, or I shall have to write a stiff note to your . . ."

"Now then, you two buffoons," Langton interposes, "instead of talking hot air let's decide what we are going to do this evening."

But Dannatt has turned sharp to the left up a sort of alley-way, and Langton and Saxon, ignoring the importunities of a paper-boy with his "'*Erald*, sir, green *'Erald!*" follow him.

Any one will tell you that the "Sawdust Club" sherry is some of the best.

Soon they emerge, but hardly have they turned to the left out of the entrance when Langton is conscious of a furtive plucking at his sleeve and of a small ragged figure at his side.

"Don't yer remember me, sir? I allus used ter give yer your '*Erald* when yer was dahn 'ere afore —a long time ago nah."

Langton looks at the pinched yet healthy face gazing up at him. What its owner is doing in the west country, goodness only knows, "Cockney" is written large all over it. "Oh yes," he says, "you're the kid I gave five bob to once; spun me some yarn about losing the money for your papers or something."

"Yes, an' 'twas trew, sir," the urchin breaks in.

"Well," Langton continues, "is it not about time you chucked this job, Tommy, and did some real work?"

"Yes, sir, an' I'm a-goin' ter in a year's time. I'm goin' ter join the Navy soon as I'm old enuff." Then wistfully he asks, "The war won't be over by then, will it, sir?"

"I fear not, my son, I fear not," Langton replies somewhat wearily; "but that's the thing to do, and good luck to you, Tommy."

"Same ter you, sir. . . . No, sir, I don't want nuffink now, really I don't," and for seconds the ragged little form refuses to accept the glistening silver coin in the outstretched hand. Then shyly pocketing it, he mutters, "I didn't stop yer fer that. Gawd bless yer, sir."

"A good plucked 'un, that lad," Langton re-

marks as the three of them wend their way eastward; and the urchin, a suspicious brightness in his eyes, returns to his pet nook and his pile of "green *'Eralds*," with thoughts, though, far above the grey street and the sordidness of his life,—thoughts of the day not so far off now when, perhaps, he may wear the King's uniform with the blue jean collar supporting its three rows of white tape, and the black silk—mute yet telling reminders (so he has been told) of a nation's hero, the one of his life and its three outstanding victories, the other a perpetual sign of mourning for his death.

Some will say that this is an absolutely fallacious doctrine; some, well versed in naval lore but, alas, so dull and deadly unimaginative, will tell you that the collar is merely a modern survival of the old-time necessity, when, as a protection to the rest of the wearer's clothes, it received the grease and flour of his pigtail—that its three rows of tape were designed purely as a relief to the prevailing blueness — that the black silk handkerchief is another relic of the Georgian uniform that has now become just an ornament.

Probably they are right; but why shatter a belief which has a delightful glamour woven around it—a belief which has almost become a tradition?

"Now, what *are* we going to do to-night?" Langton reiterated.

"Oh," Saxon replied, "a grill at the same old spot—I expect it's going just as ever; and then the Palachio, I suppose. Such is our welcome to England. We've not got much money, but we do see life!"

By now the "same old spot" is reached. Down a short flight of steps the trio descend and are swallowed up behind two swing doors. And it is "going just as ever"; the same passage-way —the same little semi-bar semi-smoking-room round the corner—the same friendly faces in attendance; then, farther on, the familiar grill-room with its mirror-bedecked walls—and, yes, the same old waiters. The *tout ensemble* cheery and hospitable, especially so for those cut off for over three months from life with anything with the smallest "l."

And at the very moment that Dannatt was ordering their grill, Sandy M'Squinty, having spied out an eating-house to his liking, was saying to the goodwife of the establishment, "It's no' a haggis ye'll be havin' in the hoose, I doot?"

Haggis in Devon!

But M'Squinty is more than satisfied with pasty, junket and cream—cream such as never

before passed his lips. Beer, too, is beer, the United Kingdom over, whether the county be Devon or Renfrew.

"Good evenin', sir, it's a long time since we've seen you in these parts," and the speaker—a big man with (in spite of the commissionaire's uniform) "navy" indelibly stamped all over him—gravely salutes Langton as the three of them pass through the music-hall entrance.

"Hullo, George," says Langton, "what are you doing here now? thought you were in the Fleet Reserve. Why, you're old opposite number is back again as a Chief Stoker on board our packet." (The fact that "George" in all probability is nothing like the real name of the person addressed seems to be of small importance; which brings to light another peculiarity of the average N.O.—how he can adopt a friendly "hail-fellow-well-met" attitude to all and sundry and lose nothing in respect by it, even should they be ex-service men. One's host at, say, a shooting party doubtless would look very astonished were one suddenly to shake hands with a beater, yet it is safe to say that there are very few who, recognising an old shipmate in this guise, would not do so. There is without a doubt a real *camaraderie* of the sea.)

A shadow of disappointment flits across the

commissionaire's face. "Yes, sir, so I was; but the doctors turned me down when we were called up. 'Eart too dickey, sir."

"Bad luck," replies Langton, "but I'm glad you remembered me."

"We old service men never forgets a face what we've known, sir, even if we only remember it through being a doorkeeper at a music 'all." Then, with a smile, "not that I mean I've ever 'ad to chuck you out, sir! Well, it's not a bad show to-night—as shows go now—and I hopes you all enjoys yourself, sir."

"We shall do that all right," replies Langton, "we've not seen much of the beach these last three months. Good-night, George."

"Good-night, sir."

And the trio pass along through the mirrored passage to the stalls, where for an hour and three-quarters they are thoroughly entertained by a programme which in peace time they would have condemned as decidedly mediocre—the inevitable "comedienne," long in the tooth and fat as to the legs—the juggler with his well-worn performance—the trick cyclists—the latest recruiting song—the abbreviated imitation revue.

But it is open to doubt whether they enjoyed it more than Private Spooner, "Nobby" Clark, Sandy M'Squinty, and several other lower deck

characters who seemed to have bought up the front row of the circle, and in the interval caused much amusement by pelting those in the pit stalls below with the contents of paper bags on which the name "Ted Weeks" appeared in large letters (to the uninitiated it may be mentioned that Ted Weeks, of candy-shop fame, is one of the celebrities of the Three Towns).

"*'Ere y'are, sir, Ted Weeks!*" Shades of Plymouth, hail!

II.

It was the tune of "Tipperary" all right, but somehow or other it did not seem to be the actual thing. So we in the Ward-room listened intently for a moment to the words of the refrain which was floating up to us from the stokers' mess deck below. Then we caught it—

"It's a long way to Valparaiso,
It's a long way to go."

So the lower deck have formed their own idea as to our destination, and for a guess pure and simple it is probably as near the mark as any that have been made; and rumour has been rife just of late.

We have been at Devonport the greater part

of four days, living in what one can only describe as a whirl—work day and night with a certain amount of play, and but for the latter we should have been "dull boys" indeed. Yesterday evening light began to show through the burden of all our frenzied tasks and preparations, so much so that coaling was arranged for the night, and at nine we undocked and were warped out into the stream.

A dull entertainment at the best of times, an all-night coaling, and typical west country weather (call it the Cornish Riviera, those who choose!), did not help to enliven matters at all. Also the inevitable reaction was setting in; we had seen the last of "the beach"—all leave expired before we undocked—and our main idea was to be off. "Whither" mattered not at all, and the remaining work before our departure was merely drudgery.

Now, this evening, the wished-for time has arrived; a chaotic afternoon is finished and done with—an afternoon with a taste of the night before in it, the aftermath of coaling mixed up with a culminating effort to achieve the impossible, for to-day might well have been the first one of our stay instead of the last, and where the seemingly endless streams of stores that still poured in faster than ever were

to be stowed was more than a problem; from the holds and storerooms came the report "no more room," and the only apparent alternative was barred, for "everything to be below the upper deck before we leave," the Commander had ordered. When the time came, so it was, somehow, even if the accommodation provided was but temporary.

We had a weird dinner in the Ward-room later on, one end of the mess being piled high with the results of the messman's last marketing — cheeses and hams galore, dried kippers, biscuits, &c., &c.—the whole delightfully redolent of the village shop, and needing only the inevitable tabby (sitting on a cheese for preference) to complete the scene. Wilson's sole remark was rather an illuminating one for him: "Think of those gorgonzolas in the tropics; my aunt!"

At last the landing of the brows saved the situation, and now, in a stormy November evening (a sou'-wester is blowing outside, they say) we are nosing our way past Devil's Point and into the Sound. A short wait is before us while our consort comes down harbour, and then the two mystery ships will be off on their mission. Whither? Perhaps two people in the whole ship more or less definitely know, certainly not more.

"H'm," Sandall murmured, apparently incoherently and more to himself than to Saxon who was standing alongside him—both of them taking a last look at the lights of Plymouth—"the glamour of war . . . bosh; but still, I suppose, one is born to be disillusioned all one's life . . . 'kiss you,' forsooth, . . . and the only girl I ever loved has just got engaged to a soldier."

It was not in any way the departure pictured by the old-time artist. In the darkness we both just slipped away, unheard and, we hoped, unheeded. Our secret had evidently been well kept, and if any one ashore had guessed a little, he apparently cared the less.

For all of which we are truly thankful.

III.

To the average person on shore it may seem peculiar—an exaggeration, in fact—to say that we were thankful when we managed to slip away quite unheeded.

Did not our friends or relations know what was ahead of us? No, we were not allowed to tell them. All that we had been permitted to say in the last letters that we were to write for weeks—months, perhaps—was that no one

was to be worried at an absolute lack of news for a long time to come.

Here is the ending of a typical officer's letter home: "Oh, by the way, this will be my last letter for some time. I'm to let you know that we are told off for a job of work where sending mails will be quite impossible. So when my usual letters don't roll up, just remember that there's absolutely no need to get worried. We are going to be all right. I'll send a line as soon as I can, and you might write sometimes yourself, as, although we shan't be able to send one, we might get a chance of picking up a mail now and then perhaps."

Which is all just an example of the spirit of our hive.

When this war has become a thing of the past; when once again you can put foot on board one of His Majesty's ships; when you, fair mademoiselle, can grace our decks for a brief hour as the guest of a cousin, a brother, or, well, no matter what relation he is, just pause for a moment to reflect and try to gain a passing insight — deeper than you have at present — into the "atmosphere" which surrounds the "matloe's" life — into the peculiarities of his temperament, for the sea alone, with its infinity of moods, breeds a temperament of its own.

Whether the ship you visit be one which has

never fired a shot in anger during the whole war (and apparently there may be some in that sad plight), or whether she be one whose decks and bulwarks show honourable battle-scars, just conjure up for your own eyes the spirit of the myriad workers on board, a spirit towards whose conception so many factors have conduced—the moan, the sigh, the shriek of the wind through the rigging; the splash of salt water on the face; the dull thunderous boom of the heavy gun; the sharp ear-piercing "crack" of the 4-inch or 12-pounder. And remember that but for this temperament, this "atmosphere" of ours, we are just ordinary mortals like you yourself.

In the old days you were rather inclined to look askance at us, you never let us outlive our reputation for hard living and hard swearing of ages ago; now, backed up and egged on by the daily press, we fear you are somewhat prone to surround us with a quite fictitious halo of romance.

True it is that even under peace routine the outside world knew very little about us, and as regards our doings in war they know a thousand times less. And not for worlds would we have it otherwise, though perhaps at times it is annoying for an officer ashore to be taken for anything but what he really is; but it is a certain fact

that he cannot do the shortest railway journey without being soundly rated at least once for not knowing "what time the next train for so-and-so leaves"!

A penalty for belonging to what the press delight in calling "The Silent Navy."

And the press at periodic intervals try to lift the veil surrounding us, but we are not at all enamoured of their efforts. They savour too much of gush for our liking; "guff" is the word we have coined to meet the case. For we are not all paragons, we are not all heroes; this sudden shore-going cult of smothering us with superlatives does not appeal to us somehow. We are only just everyday people doing their job to the best of their ability.

So long as the press will leave us alone, so long as individuals will not try to exploit us, we shall be supremely happy. We accept all your gifts with heartfelt thankfulness; we eat your apples, we smoke your tobacco, we read your books, we wear the socks you send us—the gloves, the Balaclavas (not during the next few weeks, in *our* case!); we revel in the gramophones you provide; we make the most of all your presents. If at times our thanks never seem to reach you, remember that they are none the less sincere.

Part II. The South Atlantic.

CHAPTER I.

IT'S A LONG WAY TO . . .

ENGLAND is far behind us; the submarine area has long been passed, and we have bidden a fleeting good-bye to Fritz and Karl and all their compatriot *unter see booten.* Now, untrammelled by any of old man "Tarpatch's" frightfulness, we are speeding southward, the ship rhythmically rising and falling to the south-westerly swell which the gale has left in its wake. Never could any seventeenth century buccaneer—no, not even the renowned Henry Morgan himself—have set off for the Indies or the Spanish Main with greater hopes than ours. We all seem to have taken on a new lease of life; gone is that sub-conscious feeling of disappointment which was

inevitably becoming a part of the North Sea life, for there the Big Thing was going to happen—when? *Ad Calendas Græcas?* Now for us the future assumes a roseate hue, and however far the distant horizon of our hopes may be, we only have to keep on looking forward. Over the curve of the ocean our *El Dorado* is awaiting us somewhere.

A breath of Romance to set the blood tingling and coursing more quickly through the veins of the dullest indubitably hangs over our enterprise; from our buoyed-up feelings we well might be the fleetest privateer that ever sailed under letters of marque, instead of a sombre seventeen-thousand-ton ship of His Majesty's Fleet.

We all know now exactly what our mission is—to sweep the German ensign from the foreign seas: a roving commission indeed; one which may take us no farther than that magical Spanish Main, or which may lead us just anywhere,

The whole tenor of our lives will be altered, and among other things, just as a single example, we shall be able to view the sudden jump of a porpoise without a question of "was it?" rising to our lips, for more than one porpoise has been mistaken for a "Fritz," and suffered the penalty

by having a round of 4", or smaller stuff fired at it during the last few weeks in the North Sea and other home waters.

The North Sea! Where is it?

Oh yes, we were there once, but really we have forgotten all about that now.

"'*Per mare per terram*" (the academical, not the cockneyised version, has been written), "which bein' hinterpreted means, Soljer an' Sailer too. And that's the motter ter sail under, young feller me lad. There's the bloomin' 'mary,'" and the speaker, addressing a grimy-faced individual whom we have encountered before, with a sweep of the arm encompassed the ocean far and wide, "an' the 'terram' is wot we left be'ind at Guz. It's Latin, yew know—'mary,' water, 'terram'" (here the speaker removed a dilapidated woodbine from his lips, expectorated over the ship's side, and then contorted his face into that expression which simultaneously winking and sucking the teeth produce) "'ops; h-o-p-s, 'ops."

This is our fifth day at sea. In the forenoon we entered the tropics proper, and, strange to say, up till then we had not been honoured with a single glimpse of the sun since leaving England, but even so the weather had become decidedly hot, and now in the dinner hour

to-day all the world is on deck, preening itself in the new-found sunshine. And clad though we are in whites, the real heat has come so very suddenly that we are by no means acclimatised; in fact, we are all suffering from an attack of noontide tropical lassitude.

Private Spooner, comfortably seated by the shady side of "X" turret, is more energetic than most, for he it is who is discoursing to the semi-somnolent group round him on the merits of the Royal Marines. Though how he reconciles the two meanings he has given to the motto of his regiment is beyond explanation.

"Why did I join the Marines, did you say? fer the same reason as 'im, I serpose," and Spooner points with a grimy tobacco-stained forefinger to another brother-in-arms, who both actually and metaphorically speaking is sitting at his feet. "Yus, fer the same reason as young Ginger" (this worthy, at whom Spooner's finger is still accusingly pointed, only joined the ship at Devonport — a raw recruit as regards the "mary" part of his profession, and with but six months' training behind him altogether. So, Spooner judges — and Ginger's blush-suffused countenance is confirmation enough — he will not dare to raise a dissentient voice to any words that may be put into his mouth), "'good

pay and good prospecks' was wot the recruitin' serjint told me. Didn't 'e tell yew that, Ginger?" and before the latter has time to reply Spooner adds, "Yew was caught afore the war, I presoom?"

"Yes," acquiesces Ginger, apparently in answer to both questions.

"Yus, good pay and good prospecks, that was it." Spooner is an exponent of the art of bringing a thing home by constant repetition. "I was walkin' dahn the Balham 'Igh Street one day, when a big bloke in a red toonic wiv the recrootin' rosette in his cap taps me on the shoulder and sez, ''Ere, young man, it's fine hupstandin' blokes like yew as I'm a-lookin' fer. Wot abart joinin' the Royal Marines?'

"'Royal Marines,' sez I in my soopreme hignerance, 'wot are they?'

"Serjint don't answer except to ask some more questions; 'wouldn't yew like ter be a soljer?'

"'Not arf,' sez I, not meaning ter give meself away.

"'An wot abart bein' a sailer?'

"'Not arf,' sez I agen, actin' up ter the motter of never layin' all yer cards on the table.

"'Well then,' sez 'e, 'the Marines is the very thing fer yew,' and whippin' off his cap 'e pointed

ter the globe an' laurel badge. 'See that,' sez 'e, 'per mare per terram—soljer an' sailer too; 'arf yer life afloat, arf yer life ashore; good pay an' good prospecks. Are yew on, young man?'

"'Yus,' sez I, that flabbergasted as yew could 'ave done the knock me dahn wiv a feather turn.

"'That's right, young man,' sez the serjint; 'it's a good life,' 'e sez, beginnin' ter take a fatherly sort er hinterest in me; 'plenty o' money'" ("I don't fink," Spooner adds *sotto voce*), "'plenty o' wittuals, and a Cook's tour rahnd the bloomin' world for nuffink; when yew're not yachtin' yew're shootin', and when yew're not shootin' yew're yachtin'.'

"We're doin' some of the yachtin' nah," and again Spooner with a sweep of the arm embraces the whole of the distant horizon.

And we are, too. It would be hard to find a better epitome of the first part of our voyage than Spooner's description. For it promises to be—in comparison with the North Sea routine, at all events—a real yachting trip; the shooting is to come later.

Of course the work is not being neglected one iota; every day we do a certain amount of gunnery: 1″ aiming (or "piff," as it is familiarly termed) and sub-calibre firing one day, 4″ another, and a certain amount of heavy stuff another, the two

ships towing a target and marking for each other's practice. The great wheel of our life's work is still grinding away towards perfection, faster than before, if anything, now that we are no longer hindered by the menaces which beset routine work in the North Sea.

A long "dinner hour" is the new rule for the tropics, leaving the work for the late afternóon and the comparative cool of the evening; so by now Spooner has succumbed to the prevailing disease, and, except as regards those actually on watch, for an hour or more we plough our way onwards through a sea of dreams.

"What, never?
No, never!
What, never?
Hardly ever.
He's hardly ever sick at sea."

An impromptu sing-song is taking place in the Ward-room this evening, and the piano (result of a happy thought on some one's part) is surrounded by a group of bellowing officers in various states of hot weather deshabille, all singing *at* Percy.

Who is he? A character whom we have all taken to our hearts. His real name is Henry Fenton—in private life, according to report, somewhat of a "bug" in London Chartered

Accountant circles, at present a "temporary Assistant Paymaster, R.N.R."; he joined the ship the day before we sailed. Why we call him thus and who first christened him no one knows —for Percy, as it is applied to any one in the "inverted comma" sense, is in his case an absolute libel.

Though this is our fifth day at sea it is only the second one that he has appeared in the full bloom of life, as for three whole days the south-wester claimed him to its bosom, and it was a somewhat haggard and emaciated Percy who yesterday morning began to sit up and take nourishment. Now, sea-legs found and lost time made up for, he is joining in the joke against him with as much gusto as any one. And if his present appetite is his everyday one (and not the result of his enforced fast), we may congratulate ourselves that half the mess *was* bought up on the evening we left England by gear for which at the time there seemed to be no room in the storerooms below.

All of which brings to mind the fact that as a ship's company we have suffered a few changes. A new staff (more gilded than ever if an increase in numbers can be translated that way) flit in and out of the Admiral's quarters. In the Ward-room one or two new faces are to be seen and

some old messmates are missing; the Gun-room has an addition to its numbers of four "snotties." On the lower deck, too, a few alterations have taken place: somebody had to be discharged to the Gunnery School to qualify for higher rating; somebody in the Fleet Reserve, a past victim of beri-beri, developed off the Mexican coast, to be left behind and not taken to the tropics; somebody (the powers that be are human, even in war time) with a slowly dying wife, to remain in the comparative nearness of the North Sea to his home; and so on.

But all our old friends are still with us, more by luck than good management perhaps in some cases, for (to quote one example alone) M'Squinty, whose travellings before the war had never taken him farther afield than the banks of his native Clyde, had found Devon—its pasties, its junket, its cream, its lasses—much to his liking.

So has passed our first day in the tropics. Whither our roving commission may take us, it is yet too early to conjecture; "down south" is all one knows at present.

As we say with Kipling—

> "And I'd like to roll to Rio
> Some day before I'm old."

Perhaps we may.

CHAPTER II.

OUR NEW LIFE.

As predicted, the whole tenor of our lives has altered. The day's work itself takes on a new aspect and is much less irksome, although, save for the fact that it is carried out beneath a cloudless sky and a broiling sun, the routine is very much the same whether one be in the tropics or North Sea. But we have introduced one great innovation, an imitation daylight saving bill—not necessarily to increase the amount of work done, but to provide a long spell off during the height of the day; also we are making use of the opportunity to brush up old drills and exercises—as a tonic to discipline partly. In fact, we are "back at the base" for a spell, even though the "billets" are the same ones that we have patronised the whole war.

Take a turn along the upper deck any dinner hour and a scene warranted to force a yawn to

the lips of the most strenuous-minded will meet the eye. For it is safe to say that every one off duty will be on deck, some (most, in fact) conforming to the custom of southern races and indulging in an afternoon siesta, some reading, some yarning, others with a far-away look in their eyes, lazily watching the sea through a smoke-cloud of their own making—a sea pleasantly ruffled by the north-east trade which is helping to temper the fierceness of these first few days of tropic heat; a sea which has new sights to show our eyes accustomed to the northern greyness; flying-fish which jump out of the water and take to their wings as we or a marauding coryphene (accuracy before everything, but we always call them dolphins!) disturb their revels; "Portuguese men-of-war" which float aimlessly by, apparently without a single care in the world, without so much as a thought as to whether it is even Christmas or Easter. As an example of true Stoic fatalism the "Portuguese man-of-war" takes a lot of beating.

But some of you, whose memory of a voyage through the tropics consists of a mental picture of a huge palatial liner, deck-chairs, awnings, cooling drinks concocted by an "artist," games, charming faces, moonlight *tête-à-tête*, and—well, just whatever you will, please do not run away

with the idea that we are having too good a time. Even between that life and ours in peace there is a great gulf fixed, and now . . . But there are some people whose sole idea of the sea is based on a few (quite a few, generally) trips undertaken as a passenger and in the very lap of luxury. Now and then one comes across the individual who makes some such fatuous remark as, "Oh yes, it was a ripping voyage. I did enjoy it so, but I do wish we could have had some fog and real rough weather. I *love* gales, you know," and expects us to believe it. One of the "stand right in the eyes of the ship with the glorious spray and wind buffeting their faces, clinging on to the bulwarks as the bows one moment point heavenwards and the next seem to be plunging to the nethermost depths" brigade. Perhaps that may be all right when there are just two of you and both violently in love—the hero and heroine of the sentimental novel. Perhaps! *Je ne pense pas*, as Spooner has learnt to say, in compliment to our French allies.

As regards the alleviations to the old-time trivial round, some we have lost, others are still with us, while some—killed so very early in our career—we have regained. Then new ones altogether have cropped up.

Submarines and mines temporarily are no

more; and not even the most bellicose amongst us can muster a sigh of regret at their passing. The porpoises are still very much to the fore, but with the departure of the submarine from the stage no porpoise living is now going to pull our legs; they may jump and splash and show for a second a conning-tower-like body or a periscope-like fin to their hearts' content for all we care. Zepps and rumours of Zepps are things of the past, too, but as up to the present we have never got beyond the rumour stage with them, that is not much of a change.

The diversion of boarding, the sweets of which we just tasted at the beginning of the war and then had rudely snatched away from us, has returned. And boarding, besides being an item of interest to all on deck at the time and a pleasant break in the routine to the two officers and the sea boats' crew affected (for boatwork under our present conditions of life is a real pleasure and not the doubtful one which it was in the North Sea), will have to provide us with most of the news of the outside world which we shall manage to glean in the future. Poldhu is out of range, and except for a French or neutral shore station's press news—"the rest is silence."

Observe Martin and Saxon, pistol belts making a slash of colour against their whites, standing

just forward of the after fall in the cutter at the davit-heads. (No, the whites are *not* spotless, though surely it is a grave offence against all the canons of writing to speak of them without the qualifying adjective! But a climb of about thirty feet up a jumping ladder and into a boat which off and on has been in the direct track of our smoke does not leave too much white about one's rig by the time it is accomplished.) Ahead on the starboard bow is the ship to be investigated; the Spanish *Mañana*, port of registry "Tal vez." (Echo answers, "tal vez"!)

The warning gun was fired some minutes ago; at the yard-arm flies an international signal informing the *Mañana* of our intention to board her; and by now, almost up to her, we are stopping as the engines go astern.

"Lower away," comes the order from on deck.

Soon the cutter is just clear of the water, and there she stays for a moment with the crest of the Atlantic swell licking her keel as it passes underneath her, while the officer superintending operations from the deck above awaits the most favourable second.

"Slip," comes in a shout from above.

A rattle of gear, a drop of a few feet, a splash—and almost before those watching realise it, the

cutter is well away from the ship and off on her errand.

Arrived alongside their quarry, Martin and Saxon scramble on board. The latter has a more than superficial knowledge of Spanish, so is anxious to test his prowess.

"Buenos dias, señor," he says to the merchant-ship captain.

"Good day, sir," answers the Spanish skipper in quite good English. He has not taken coal from Newcastle for twelve or more years for nothing.

"¿De donde viene Vd.?" continues Saxon, determined not to drop back into his own language now that he has got started.

"I 'ave come from Buenos Aires, Montevideo, and Rio," answers the Spaniard.

"¿Ha visto Vd. á algunos Alemános?" Saxon asks.

"No," replies the skipper, "I 'ave not seen the Gairman anywhere except laid up in de 'arbours."

"¿Y su cargamento?" Saxon queries, and quickly the Spaniard details in English his ship's cargo.

So it goes on, both of them quacking away in each other's language with huge success, and Saxon's hand work is an absolute eye-opener.

But, funnily enough, the actual business of the day does not seem to progress, and neither of them, now that they are really on their mettle, is going to give in; that is altogether too much to expect.

With an amused smile on his face Martin watches the proceedings for quite a while, and then, thinking perhaps that enough time has been wasted, says—

"Well, Captain, if you'll show me the ship's papers and just uncover your hatches we'll get on with the work. I'm sorry to have to give you any trouble."

"Sairtainly, sir; no trouble at all," and with a perfect bow and outstretched hands the Spaniard as good as says, "Su buque de Vd., señor."

"All correct" is the verdict, and soon, the cutter back and hoisted, we are off on our way once more.

Visit the Ward-room during the dog-watches, and there we shall find—no one. But a fiendish rattle, clatter, slap, bang on the deck overhead announce all too forcibly that something fairly strenuous is going on up above. A violent hockey match is in progress—Ward-room *v.* Gun-room—and the heat and a still blazing sun seem to increase the players' energy rather than

otherwise; and we have no awnings to provide us with a shady deck apace. But the Englishman and the dog always choose the sunny side of the street!

Carry on "forrard" and we shall come across the officers' canvas bath and its devotees. Of course we all patronise it once in the evening, but there are one or two characters who seem to spend the whole of the time, when off duty between evening quarters and dinner, therein. Sinbad and Percy are standing numbers. If a messenger comes up in the evening with, "could you tell me where Mr Marks is, sir?" one need not even stop to think, but just says, "in the bath," and nine times out of ten one will be right. To Percy, of course, everything is an absolute novelty, and if any one possibly can make twenty-five hours out of twenty-four, Percy comes well to the front. Simply to watch him would be an ideal tonic for jaded nerves.

Turn round and stroll aft, and on the poop we shall see a similar scene, for the men have their bath too. As is but natural, the competition for its use is somewhat greater, and the byplay perhaps is rather more pronounced, but the spirit is just the same.

Then among other diversions, we have one which combines business with pleasure, for on

the forecastle is rigged up a morris tube rifle range and a pistol range, and all and sundry may come and try their skill. But after Saxon scored six misses running with his pistol, we began to wonder why he takes it away with him on his boarding expeditions.

"Shure," said Terence, giving up his rifle to the next candidate after scoring a possible but for one inner, "it rhemoinds me of before the warr when Oi was practising ivery evenin'."

"What for?" Fraser queried.

"Oh, got on wid ye," he replied; "it's not afther having any doubts on that point, ye are. And you in parleyment, too."

Terence, though a full-blown Engineer Lieutenant, is only a temporary entry — what the authorities call "for the period of hostilities," what the lower deck, as applied to one of themselves, term a "duration."

There is only one point where the heat becomes a really trying problem — the darken ship question. But we have got over that to a great extent, and have managed to ensure that a fairly free current of air passes through the ship during the night to relieve the stifling heat between decks.

But nothing that is done can satisfy every one, and Saxon, who retired from the dinner-table

to-night immediately after "the King" had been drunk, quickly reappears with a colossal "moan."

"I go down to my cabin to try to get on with this blooming magazine, when all of a sudden the lights on that circuit are dimmed," and he holds up two purple-stained hands as evidence of a twilight struggle (in which he evidently came off a bad loser) with hectograph ink and a "jelly" which practically refuses to set in these climes. Saxon is editor-in-chief and sole compositor of our magazine, and is busily engaged on the production of the Christmas number: wherein he is unconsciously conforming to custom, for according to journalistic wags all editors plan their "seasonable" Christmas productions, and all contributors to such pen their efforts, at the height of midsummer. One can enter into the spirit of snow, holly, and Christmas bells so much better in the sweltering heat, with a long cooling drink at one's elbow. Except Saxon, perhaps.

We do not notice the lack of mails so much as might be expected when it is recalled what a great event in our lives "up there" the arrival of the mail was. Perhaps it is only natural, for when one knows that a certain thing is unattainable one never hankers after it. And as we receive no mails, neither do we write any letters

ourselves; for it is an energetic man indeed who will solemnly sit down to compose a letter which he knows *may* be posted in a couple of months' time but not much before. But as the censors say, "It's an ill wind . . ."

So much for the new relaxations of the tropical life. Not very warlike, one may remark, but we can console ourselves with the thought that every day is bringing us nearer to the greatest diversion of all. As we speed southward we feel that each moment we are getting warmer—in more senses than one.

The present is the heyday of our war existence, and we are making the most of everything.

Ver non semper viret.

II.

"Let go!"

Bang goes the blacksmith's hammer as with a swinging blow that worthy knocks off the slip, and the huge anchor glides down the hawse-pipe; with a rumble, rattle, and roar out runs the cable to the appointed number of shackles, leaving in its wake a rusty mist, which the evening sunshine transforms into a metallic golden rain.

Simultaneously, almost, comes the boom of the first round of our twenty-one gun salute,

We have arrived at our first port of call—in "furrin' parts." Here there is no mail drifter awaiting us—the great "exhilaration" with which we were wont to connect our arrival in harbour; but there is the ubiquitous "depression," and anchored close by lies a collier all ready for our use.

But we are not going to start coaling absolutely immediately, and all who can are on deck, "sitting up and taking nourishment," for there are many little incidents to afford us some passing amusement—to take the place of anything we got "up there" one might almost say, save for the fact that nothing can ever make up for a lack of mails.

Although we have only just arrived—coming down wind the booming of the Portuguese gunboat's return salute is still to be heard—already we are surrounded by a crowd of native boats, whose dusky occupants are confident (if the oranges, bananas, and knick-knacks with which each craft is piled gunwale-high speak for anything) of doing a roaring trade with us. But alas! (and for the "matloe" it is "alas" with a vengeance as he looks at those baskets of oranges) their con-

fidence is somewhat misplaced, as all are ordered to keep at a discreet distance; so their zeal, though they cannot be made to understand it, rather savours of love's labour lost. The fortunes of war.

"You speakee English?" Spooner hails one boat passing under the stern as near as its occupants dare.

"Ess, I spikee Engleesh. You buy de pos' car'; you buy de orange? 'Ere, cor-ral necklace, ver' good," and as he enumerates his wares the owner displays at arm's-length each article in turn.

And the oranges *do* look inviting, doubly so to our parched mouths as they are forbidden fruit; but doubtless the canteen manager will be ashore marketing before long, and if he does not bring off a plentiful stock, woe betide him. He has not crossed the Line yet.

"Alley-voos ong, imshi you," Spooner replies, evidently deciding that he, too, must show some knowledge of foreign tongues. Then he continues, "You no wanted here, shove off."

We did not expect to pick up an addition to our list of celebrities at St Vincent ("I did not know we were going to the West Indies," some one had said; which shows that being a sailor is no criterion to a knowledge of geography), but we

have — a youthful individual of sub-fusc hue. Sebastian he was dubbed at once by Saxon, and Sebastian is quite a character in his own quiet way. At the present moment he is sitting hunched up as if suffering from a violent stomach-ache, naked but for a *very* dirty cotton shirt thrown over his shoulders, on the thwart of a decrepit boat, the other two occupants of which are momentarily earning a rich harvest by diving for pennies.

Soon his two brothers, or whatever they are, tire of doing all the work, and evidently decide that the time has come for their charge to pay his footing in the evening's entertainment, for suddenly they wriggle over the gunwale—clad solely in their copper-hued nakedness (have you ever noticed the glorious tinge of copper to which the black man turns in the water?)—and coolly and calmly throw poor Sebastian overboard; then both gesticulate and gibber in their mongrel Portuguese as a sign to the crowd of officers watching on deck to try Sebastian's skill.

Already it is all too apparent that our *protégé* is somewhat of a novice, not only at diving for pennies, but even at swimming; but he is a hero also, for though to our eyes it seems that he is on the point of going under for ever and aye, he is making a valiant effort to recover a penny which

some one has thrown into the water just by his head.

And the two dusky youths merely look on in disdain.

But they evidently know young Sebastian's powers of endurance, and not for some seconds more does one of them dive in, grab the juvenile warrior by the scruff of the neck, and hand him up to his companion in the boat, who drags him on board.

Sebastian retires to his thwart, negligently wraps the cotton shirt round his shoulders, splutters and coughs for a space, and then sits —a huddled-up shivering black ball (for the evening air begins to strike chill)—to await his next performance.

But the curtain is ringing down on the impromptu entertainment, and a warning note on the collier's syren tells its own tale.

The last that we saw of Sebastian that evening (oh yes, he turned up again next morning) was a little dark elf of the sea, still clad solely in his dirty cotton shirt, perched in the bows of his crazy bark, and industriously paddling with a broken stick through the short-lived tropic twilight.

Our brief stay, with the resultant salutes and official visits, quite brings back to us the pomp

and circumstance of former days—the ceremonial which we cast aside nearly four months ago now. Everything seems strange with the bustle of new-found interest, and this afternoon, as the time for our departure approaches, although we are all thoroughly tired out by the long and wearisome coaling which did not finish till well into the forenoon, we feel almost sorry that we are sailing so soon.

We are still an item of great interest to the natives, if being surrounded by a fleet of small boats means anything, and we cannot help wondering whether to the black man's mind we are just a "beeg sheep" or anything more; then, unexpectedly, the puzzle is answered for us. Sebastian and his *confrères*, of course, are here to see us off (they have been out since soon after daybreak as a matter of fact, but that is a minor detail), and now, as we swing our nose round to the open sea and begin to draw ahead, the eldest of the trio stands up in unabashed nakedness, and says, "Goo'-bye, sah. Goo' luck. German no good."

Is it a sign of the times, or does it merely mean that pennies—or their German equivalent—have not been showered in such profusion from the decks of the enemy merchantmen laid up in the harbour as from ours?

Who knows? We choose to think the former, in illogical compliment to Sebastian, who cannot possibly be possessed of a single thought on the matter.

Vale, Sebastian; homeward bound, the victory won, we may meet anon perhaps.

Here's hoping.

CHAPTER III.

LAT. 0°, LONG. 31° W.

"GUNS" has been very mysterious the last day or two, button-holing the old sea-dogs of the mess and holding low-toned conversations in out-of-the-way corners. It was only this afternoon that we solved the mystery. At least Langton did, as—stretched out in an arm-chair and apparently at ease, but actually very hot and uncomfortable—he was trying to snatch a post-prandial "caulk"; and though he says that in this he was unsuccessful, his appearance must evidently have belied the statement, for "Guns" and two others who came in on business bent treated him as non-existent.

"It's a pity we shall actually do it late on Saturday, because that means celebrating the event before it happens," "Guns" remarked.

"Oh, that's all right," said Voice No. 2; "we shall have the show on the proper day, which is

the main thing. How many are there in the mess to go through the hoop?"

"All but half a dozen, roughly; I think I know about every one. The only one of the older brigade that I'm at all doubtful of is the Pay," was "Guns's" ungrammatical reply.

"The Pay? Why, of course he has," Voice No. 3 broke in.

"How d'you know?"

"Look at his South African ribbon."

"What a fool I am!" said "Guns" in that tone of voice which puts emphasis on every single word.

"Quite so, my dear Watson," Voice No. 3 carried on; "you know my methods. You have not observed. And yet you have seen. That is . . ."

But the sally of laughter which greeted this plagiarism forced Langton to reveal his wide-awakeness, and the trio drifted out of the open doorway and up on deck.

So now we know. "Guns" is the stage manager for the approaching crossing the Line celebrations. And a very good one, too, we all agreed when Langton told the tale.

It is the evening before "the day"—a gorgeous evening of tropic calm, and all the officers off duty

are having their after-dinner smoke on the forecastle. Overhead the panoply of night is pierced with golden stars innumerable, all around us a silvery ocean merges imperceptibly into the phantom horizon. We seem to be travelling o'er a sea of enchantment, and over all hangs an air of mystery—an air of the infinite. It is too hot to do anything but sit in the most comfortable attitude possible; it is too hot to talk even, and one just stays immobile, listening to the swish of our bow wave—watching, if one has chosen a billet by the ship's side, the phosphorescent gleam of the water as we plough a passage through.

Two bells strike, and so suddenly as to make us all involuntarily start, a loud voice from just ahead hails, "Ship ahoy!" Peering into the darkness we can faintly espy a wondrous bearded figure. The son of Saturn is in our midst (it is lucky that forecastle hatch is open), come to announce his royal desire.

"Aye, aye," the Captain answers from the bridge aloft, and Neptune forthwith claims for the morrow his ancient privilege of initiating into the mysteries of his realm all who have not previously paid their homage.

It is an informal visit, really; the Sea King has just climbed on board without Court and

retinue, without pomp or ceremony, so the Captain treats him in the spirit in which he has arrived. . . . And from the smacking of lips as he returned to the deep we gather that our taste in champagne must have been to his royal liking.

Even though there was more than champagne that came out of Rheims in peace time (*malgré* the bottle), as we tell Dannatt, our wine caterer. For ships so often seem to strike the "more than" brand, or what Mr H. G. Wells's Uncle Pentstemon would have termed "grocer's stuff!"

II.

SCENE.—*A general view (looking forward from the break of the poop, where are rigged up a huge canvas bath brimful of water, two "ducking" chairs, and all the paraphernalia for the coming rites) along the upper deck of one of His Majesty's ships. At the head of their Court, which is drawn up on the forecastle, are Neptune and Amphitrite, seated in the State Coach. Preceding them are trumpeters and various weirdly apparelled individuals armed with divers* (un)*musical instruments, while to one side is drawn up the ship's band. The latter strikes up "A life on the ocean wave," and with banners flying the regal procession slowly makes its way aft, where is assembled a motley crowd—comprising the highest and the lowest—of loyal subjects. The time is 10 a.m.*

So much for the setting of to-day's *pièce de résistance*. Now let us regard more fully the

chief actors in the comedy (alas! we are most of us going to be actors in very minor parts).

Neptune, trident held in a strong right hand, is a majestic form indeed; yet, somehow, his features, in spite of a flowing beard (but for the risk of *lèse-majesté* we would describe this as tow), recall to us our worthy Gunner. His spouse, Amphitrite, strikes one as being rather a skittish young thing; from the playful way in which she dug her consort in the ribs as a signal for proceedings to commence, he need never have worried over her flight to Mount Atlas; the sending of a dolphin to bring her back must have been a pure supererogation of love's anxiety.

Many figures, terrifying and barbaric in appearance and all garbed in the weirdest costumes, compose the retinue: a herald with two attendant sea-urchins—a secretary—medicine men—barbers—police, before whose stature and general impressiveness the R.I.C. themselves would pale—and last but not least, the bears and widgermen on whom, after the barbers have "done their bit," devolves the work of the day.

The minor properties comprise among other things papyrus and quill for the secretary's use, gigantic wooden razors, a bucket of noxious lather, and a huge box adorned with a red (iron) cross and labelled, "Pills, soap. Cheap, very."

By now the procession has reached the quarter-deck; the trumpeters blow a fanfare, and all come to a halt. Out steps the herald, who unrolls a scroll, holds it upside down, and proceeds to declaim to all and sundry on the object of His Oceanic Majesty's visit.

Then comes the speech from the Throne: "Admiral, Captain, officers, and men, my Queen and I present greetings. We have come on board your ship, as We have done from time immemorial, to greet Our children of the sea, and to admit them into the mysteries of Our Realm. . . . We have heard with dismay that a nation, drunk with a policy of blood and iron, is warring with your Sovereign in the realm over which We hold no sway. . . . May the enterprise on which you are engaged be successful. May you wipe from the face of Our kingdom an ensign which We have never recognised. Our blessing goes with you."

Follows another fanfare, and the herald ushers the Admiral and other personages who have been marked down as recipients of favours into the Royal Presence. With befitting pomp and ceremony (but Amphitrite really should not have sniggered at a critical moment) the honours (it is superfluous to describe them, every German wears about a dozen at the least) are bestowed, and then

the coach is conducted to a suitable position from which the Royal Pair can watch the proceedings.

All is ready. The barbers are at their posts, and alongside stands the chief medicine man with box of physic close at hand. In the pond are the bears and widgermen, and as they have smeared themselves with some concoction of the painter's which does not seem to be in the least wet-resisting, the water—even at this early stage—already is decidedly murky. Also some of the "sporrans" of tow with which they have augmented their grotesque rigs are breaking away, so that in a very few minutes the bath will be little better than an imitation Sargasso Sea.

The effects sported by the retinue in general are comical in the extreme, and of course the "dressing up" was a huge delight to the hearts of those concerned. Gunner Murphy it was who accosted his friend Spooner (well to the front you may be sure) with, "P'what the hell are you?"

"I'm one o' the Court," Spooner answered. "What d'yew think I am—a bloomin' Harcadian?"

Yes, the prologue is over; the stage is rigged, the mummers are in their places, the auditorium is packed. So Neptune gives the signal: the band strikes up the opening chorus—the invisible curtain rises. But here the first pause occurs.

We can all of us remember the conjurer's plausible invitation, "Will some gentleman kindly step up to the stage and assist me in my entertainment?" and there is always an interval before a bold spirit can be induced to become the necessary lamb, for whoever does rise to the occasion knows too well that he is going to be made to appear ludicrous, and no sober-minded person likes to have a thousand or so people rocking with laughter at him because rabbits in profusion are apparently jumping from his pockets, or because his knee-joints appear to be gold-mines of sovereigns.

So now. Of course it is "up to" the officers, but for a second or more no one comes forward to set the ball rolling, and Neptune's satellites are waiting expectantly. Then out steps the Commander and boldly seats himself in one of the "chairs." None of the Court procedure is omitted —the shaving is punctiliously carried out, the nauseating pill administered, and then with a sudden tilt the sitter is precipitated into the bath. Here, perhaps, he does escape some of the playful rough handling to which future novitiates will be subjected; even though he is merely a bedraggled spluttering form, the "brass hat" and visions of the defaulters' table perhaps slightly damp the ardour of the bears! For no

good reason, though, as the latter would be the first to acknowledge.

Martin has followed, and now all the officers in pairs lead off the gay procession which is to occupy the Court's attentions for hours to come. Then come the men—an ideal opportunity, one may think, for the bears to pay off any old scores; perhaps. But that is not the "matloe's" way, and everything is carried out with the utmost good-humour. Though the Canteen Manager did come in for rather more than his fair share of the festivities (he must have been adrift with those oranges, after all), for if he went through the bath once, he went through it a dozen times.

Altogether the Court, with a break at noon, lasted until three o'clock, and so zealous and capable were the police that by that time there were very few who had managed to escape the ordeal.

The Royal Procession re-forms, the Captain thanks His Majesty for having honoured the ship with his presence, and Neptune, with a grandiloquent wave of the hand, gives the order, "Away, my bonny boys, to the deep." The band strikes up, and in state the Court retires to the depths of the ocean; at least, once they disappear through the forecastle hatch, they are seen no more.

All of us who crossed the Line that day for the first time will cherish the certificate with which we were presented after the ceremony—not so much as a memory of the occasion itself, but as a memory (which as time passes will grow more fragrant rather than faded) of the stirring times in which the deed was done.

Here it is :—

This is to certify that *crossed the Line on Saturday, November 21st, 1914, in H.M.S. "———," and having been duly initiated into the mysteries of the deep in the presence of Us and Our whole Court, he is hereby rated son o' Neptune.*

Given under Our Hand and Seal at Our Court at the Equator.

Seal.

CHAPTER IV.

'NEATH THE SOUTHERN CROSS.

THUS we proceed, just breaking away from our course at times—now to search out an island suspected of being used as an enemy base, now on the track of what we have come to regard as the mythical *Karlsruhe*. The time passes so pleasantly that we hardly heed its passage; we float through our tropic life, fed on rumours and—to be thoroughly Irish—the lack of news of the outside world. Yet on that point we do not come off at all badly, for certainly we board on an average one steamer a day, and Martin and Saxon invariably bring back with them a comparatively modern paper, either Argentine or Brazilian. Then the Spanish and Portuguese scholars—and if there are not many, there are several who claim to be—get to work and produce their translations. And it was only a day or two ago when one pseudo-Spaniard (who had denied—*and rightly too*

—any knowledge of Portuguese) brought out a wonderful, flowery, and "too-good-to-be-true" edition of the war bulletins in a Brazilian paper, that we began to take our news *cum* . . .

A short halt of twenty-four hours for coaling, when, incidentally, we pick up the other ships of our squadron—*Carnarvon*, *Kent*, *Cornwall*, *Bristol*, *Glasgow*, *Orama* (armed merchant cruiser), and several colliers—(the Vice-Admiral's flag at the fore of the "Commander-in-Chief, South Atlantic and South Pacific," seems to take to itself an added lustre from this moment), and present them with the stores and ammunition brought out from England. Then on we go, the colliers following under convoy of the *Orama*, ever with one call in our ears—south, south, south. The wireless gives us the spice essential to prevent our existence becoming too humdrum. One day a flutter in the merchant-ship dovecot, detected and pried into by our aerials, gives life to a suspicion that the enemy are somewhere in the vicinity. "To-morrow, perhaps," we say as we turn in, but—relic of childhood's days—to-morrow never seems to come. Then back we go to our old conclusion that they are still off the western Chilian coast. But perhaps we are too impatient, for actually the "to-morrow" of our dreams arrived earlier than we really hoped or expected.

Over a fortnight has passed since we said "adieu" to Sebastian — eighteen days to be accurate — and now early this morning, as we shiver in the new-found cold (we have been back in "blues" a day or two), from the look-out comes the cry, "Land ahead!" The Falkland Islands are in sight; the date is December 7.

Gradually we approach our goal. "Look," says Saxon, pointing to a sandy beach which comes into view as we round Pembroke Point— "look at all these kids bathing over there, what a hullabaloo there'll be when they see us!" All eyes are turned on the spot, but it is difficult to make out things plainly, and no one has a pair of glasses handy.

"But what extraordinary antics they are up to," says Langton—"see that long line solemnly marching inland line ahead?"

Here we notice that Martin, who has visited these parts before, is bent almost double, seemingly in great agony.

"What's the matter, old bird?" asks Dannatt in true bedside manner.

"It's your children!" Martin blurts out between two extra bad spasms.

"Children," says Dannatt in disgust; "whatever do you mean?"

"Oh, my sacred aunt," Sandall, who has bor-

rowed a passing signalman's telescope, breaks in, "they're penguins!"

Half-past ten sees us at anchor off Port William. The smaller ships are sent inside to Port Stanley—through the Narrows and past the *Canopus*, who, moored head and stern in a position commanding the approaches of the harbour, is awaiting our arrival. She, chameleon-like as regards paint-work, has turned herself into a land fort to all intents and purposes.

A certain number of colliers are here, ready for the squadron's use, but not enough for every one to coal together, and the *Orama's* convoy cannot be expected for a day or two. So some ships begin at once, but as our coaling is arranged for 4 A.M. to-morrow, all who can take the opportunity of going on a prospecting trip ashore.

When the history of this war is written, if justice be done a very big chapter must be devoted to the unswerving devotion and loyalty to their King and Flag of our colonies—a devotion which is realised by those of the Mother Country, but which needs first-hand acquaintanceship in time of stress for its glorious magnitude to be fully brought home. And here is a case in point.

Our arrival was totally unexpected, and it is no exaggeration or attempt at self-aggrandisement to

say that every one was overjoyed at our presence—for, truly, the plight of the inhabitants was precarious, and as each day had passed, so, in their minds, had the inevitable attempt by the Germans to wrest the Falklands from British sway grown nearer and nearer, and, as things turned out, we only arrived in time by less than twenty-four hours!

But apathy in the face of heavy odds was not their motto; "wait and see" was not their watchword; there was hardly a man who had not prepared for "the day," who was not all too willing to give his life, his all, in what, without our presence, would have been a vain though glorious struggle for his home and his colony, but above all for *Britain*.

The Islands had been put into a complete state of military and naval defence, as far as the rather limited means at disposal permitted. As has been said, the *Canopus* was practically a land fort, with her four 12-inch guns commanding the approaches, while most of her 12-pounders had been landed and mounted ashore at strategical points; she had also done much good work by erecting observation huts, range-taking stations, &c., and in addition had laid out an observation mine-field at the entrance to the harbour (we were piloted through on our arrival). As regards the local military

precautions, the Falkland Island Volunteers—a standing corps—were fully mobilised, and there were very few able-bodied men who did not belong to them: splendid shots and riders—all horses, ponies, &c., had been requisitioned for their use,—tough and hardy, too, they would have given a very warm reception to any landing party the Germans could have sent against them, but for the heavy guns of our ships.

Such was the state of affairs on our arrival at the Falklands.

CHAPTER V.

THE BATTLE OF THE FALKLANDS.

It is only possible to review the happenings of December 8 as *un fait accompli*.

"Come along, come along, lash up and stow; show a leg, show a leg, lash up and sto-o-w." Oh hateful words! Doubly so on coal ship morning. And thus at the early hour of 3.30 A.M. was December 8, 1914, ushered in for the majority of our ship's company.

By jingo, how cold it was, too! Nothing like so bad as it felt, of course, but somehow or other we seemed in little more than a day to have dropped from that sublime state of boiling in a thin vest to that of shivering in more clothes than one wears in an English winter.

Sharp as eight bells struck coaling began.

Everything went along very smoothly, the cool weather giving promise of a speedy job, and at about quarter to eight "breakfast" was piped.

Then at eight o'clock a report was received from the signal station at Sapper Hill (behind the town) that men-of-war (one four-funnelled) could be seen approaching from the southward, and very shortly after further information came through that more smoke was visible beyond these vessels.

"The Japanese, perhaps," we said. No. The enemy were in sight!

It was a glorious morning, and the cloudless sky and calm sea gave every promise of an ideal day for an action at long range, but . . . we were coaling! We could only hope that the enemy would not be able to see the two battle cruisers over the land, for we surmised that if, as we hoped, they had no knowledge of our presence in the South Atlantic, they must have decided in their own minds that they were competent to engage the ships they expected to find; but directly they should see us, their opinions would inevitably take a different turn.

This was the day on which the secrecy with which our movements had been cloaked earned its reward, for prisoners that we took after the action declared that they had not the slightest suspicion of the proximity of battle cruisers; in their own words, when they saw us rounding the point on leaving harbour, they "tried not to believe it."

Of course coaling ceased at once and steam was hurried on in all boilers; at half-past eight "action" was sounded, and a quarter of an hour later the collier shoved off and so made it possible for us to open fire, in case of necessity, over the low-lying land to the southward of Port William. The *Macedonia*, an armed merchant cruiser who had joined us two or three days before after a visit to Montevideo, was patrolling off the entrance, and now the *Kent* was also ordered out to reconnoitre and make reports of the enemy.

By twenty minutes past nine two of the enemy, still apparently all unsuspicious, had approached to within approximately 17,000 yards, so the *Canopus* opened fire with her 12-inch guns, firing four rounds. The shots fell short, but they served their purpose, for though not actually frightening them off, they evidently caused the enemy "furiously to think," and so delayed any plan of action they had formed till we were all ready to put to sea. It transpired that their intentions had been to destroy the Fleet and wireless station, and then capture the islands.

By a quarter to ten the *Glasgow* had joined the *Kent* off the mouth of the harbour, and the *Macedonia* returned again to await orders. And then, steam being ready in all ships but the

Bristol, the squadron sailed in the following order: *Carnarvon*, *Inflexible*, ourselves, *Cornwall*; the *Bristol* and the *Macedonia* were left behind for the time being. The *Canopus*, of course, could not come out, as she was intentionally beached on the mud to turn her into a real "army fashion" fort, and prevent her moving or yawing in the very slightest degree with the changes of tide.

On clearing Pembroke Point Light at about twenty minutes past ten, five of the enemy ships could be plainly seen over to the south-east of us, and almost hull down on the horizon; they resolved themselves into the *Scharnhorst* (flag), *Gneisenau*, *Dresden*, *Leipzig*, and *Nürnberg*. And what a shock they must have had when they realised that they were caught, hopelessly caught —and in a trap of their own making.

A few minutes later the Admiral's signal "Chase," fluttered from our halliards, and the *Inflexible* and ourselves quickly ran ahead of the other ships and began to draw up with the *Kent* and *Glasgow*. At ten minutes past eleven the battle cruisers eased down, and from then for the next hour were going anything from 19 to 20 knots; this allowed the other ships to catch us up, and as our spurt had told us that we easily had the legs of the enemy and could play our

own game, the hands were sent to dinner, at half-past eleven, by watches.

It must sound rather weird to hear that "the hands went to dinner"; one might be excused for imagining that dinner would be the last thought in any man's mind at such a time. Most probably it was. But the old maxim that an army fights on its stomach just as well applies to the navy, and all during the chase the cooks had been busily at work in the galley getting the men's food ready should there be an opportunity for them to have it. Both officers and men, too, were just like sweeps, so advantage was taken of the time for a wash and to change out of coaling rig.

At twenty minutes past twelve speed was increased; the battle cruisers again drew ahead, and by ten minutes to one we were doing our maximum, about 26½ knots, or perhaps at times a little more. Five minutes later (12.55 P.M.) the *Inflexible* fired the first shot from her fore turret at the right-hand enemy light cruiser. The curtain had risen on the second act of the great drama.

Three minutes passed, and then we ourselves opened a slow and infrequent fire at the same target, the range being approximately 16,000 yards. Whether at this distance any shots took

effect (one appeared to) it was very difficult to see, but by 1.20 P.M. things were evidently getting so hot for them that the German Admiral in the *Scharnhorst* apparently ordered his light cruisers to leave the line and try to break away, for they turned to starboard, to be chased by the *Kent, Cornwall,* and *Glasgow*.

It was now that the real action began. The light cruisers were off on their own, and the *Inflexible* and ourselves had pitted against us the *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau*—the crack gunnery ships of the German Navy. It must have been very thrilling for the crews of the *Kent* and her consorts; they had a stern chase before them, and there was no possibility of them coming to grips with their quarry for some little time—they could do nothing but watch us as long as we remained in sight. An officer in the *Cornwall* very tersely described the situation in a letter home by saying: "We left our stations and lined up on the f'xle to watch the big ships fight."

And from here onwards generalities can no longer be recorded; such great things are afoot that it is only possible to talk of our own ship's doings.

II.

Up till this stage of the engagement the enemy had been in a more or less straggling quarter-line, and the departure of the light cruisers made the *Scharnhorst* (flagship of Admiral Count von Spee) our best target, and we at once opened fire on her. At 1.25 P.M. the *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* turned nearly eight points to port into line ahead, *Gneisenau* temporarily leading, and five minutes later they both opened fire, concentrating on us alone as being the flagship. At first, however, their shots fell very short, and they evidently much underestimated the range. Shortly after this the *Scharnhorst* passed ahead and became leader of the line, but we continued to direct our fire at her.

This alteration of course quickly lessened the range, which by half-past one was approximately eight miles, so we ourselves, with the *Inflexible* astern, turned eight points to port, and thereby put ourselves on an almost parallel course with the enemy. The latter kept up a very brisk fire, and by a quarter to two, having picked up the range, began to give us quite a warm time, their salvoes falling all around. It was at this stage that we were first hit.

Our courses being slightly divergent, the range began to increase, and at two o'clock had become so great that from all appearances the firing on both sides was quite ineffective. We therefore made a gradual turn of eight points to starboard, and for the next three-quarters of an hour there was a lull in the proceedings, the guns on both sides keeping silence. This manœuvre compelled the enemy also to turn to starboard at a much greater angle than we had done, so during the lull the affair again resolved itself into a chase on our part to lessen the range and bring them into action once more.

About this time a message came through from the Port Stanley wireless station to say that transports had been sighted on the south side of the Islands. The *Bristol* and *Macedonia* were therefore sent to deal with them, and though it seemed certain that a transport had been there with a landing party and field-guns, all ready for the invasion of the Falklands, she managed to escape, and the only two vessels that could be found were two enemy colliers, which were sunk after their crews had been taken from them.

So great had the range been during this first part of the action, that unless a fire actually broke out as the result of a shell exploding, it

was very hard to tell whether we were finding our mark; but it was quite certain that we had made some hits, and the *Inflexible*, too, seemed to be putting in effective work.

With us going at full speed and the staff in the engine-room doing their very utmost (never had we managed to touch such a speed before), the range was rapidly brought down, and at 2.48 P.M. we once more opened fire on the *Scharnhorst*. For a space the enemy kept their course and refrained from replying, but at 2.53 P.M. they both turned to port and commenced.

The next half-hour seemed the most strenuous time of the fight, for the fire on both sides was rapid and accurate; the enemy were certainly considerably battered, while we ourselves were hit several times. It could be noticed, though, that the *Scharnhorst's* fire gradually slackened, and smoke and flames forward of her showed that a serious fire had broken out.

To be able, as a disinterested spectator and from a safe coign of vantage, to watch a modern naval engagement does not fall to the lot of many, but about this time, at a distance of two or three miles on our port hand, we passed a large full-rigged sailing-ship; naturally we had not time to pay any attention to her, and, except

for noticing that in the distance her colours seemed to be either British or Norwegian, she was speedily out of mind though for a time not out of sight.

At 3.15 P.M. we made the first of a series of turns to port, and temporarily directed our fire on the *Gneisenau*, and by 3.25 we had altogether turned completely round, and a further four points as well. Five minutes later the enemy again turned eight points to starboard, and thus we were once more going on practically parallel courses, but with our port side to the enemy.

Fire was again directed at the *Scharnhorst*, who by now was beginning to present a very sorry appearance with her third funnel shot away and the whole ship enveloped in smoke from numerous fires. Her upper-works seemed to be but a shambles of torn and twisted steel and iron, and through holes in her side could be seen, even at the great distance we were from her, dull red glows as the flames gradually gained the mastery between decks.

Her firing had very perceptibly slackened, and yet, from such guns as were still in action, a very good fight was maintained. But by 4 o'clock it was apparent to all that she was a doomed ship, and a few minutes later she listed heavily

to port; by 4.10 P.M. she was on her beam-ends, and seven minutes later she sank. Poor *Gneisenau!* She now had to fight alone two battle cruisers, and also during the next few minutes had to steam through a sea dotted with the forms of those from her sunken consort who had survived the ordeal by fire and shell only to suffer death by drowning—firing, too, over their heads.

As both German ships had concentrated their fire on us the whole time, it can readily be imagined that we had come through by no means scatheless; we had been hit a considerable number of times, but, though a lot of damage had been done, had so far escaped any really serious injury.

It is truly difficult to give any idea of a naval action; the whole affair seems somehow so impersonal, so detached. Right away on the horizon can be seen the enemy—to the naked eye just pigmies belching out clouds and clouds of smoke. On board our own ship the noise is simply deafening, as round after round leaves the muzzles of the hungry, sinister 12-inch guns. Up in the control position from time to time can be heard the cry of "Six coming!" or "Five coming!" as the case may be, as splashes of fire on the enemy's

side announce that a salvo has been fired—*at us*. Seconds pass, and then comes the whirr and shriek of the shells and the final huge "woomph, woomph . . .," as they rain down in the sea just short or just over us. Perhaps some find their billet, and then there is a huge explosion, and for a space we "waggle our tail," just like a duck shaking water off its back. And then on we go, firing, firing . . .

For some minutes before the *Scharnhorst* sank we had transferred our fire to the *Gneisenau*, and it was soon clear that she was in difficulties and suffering considerably. We rapidly closed the range by a gradual turn to port, and then at about 4.20 P.M. we turned right round on our tracks, as funnel smoke was causing us considerable annoyance. Further large alterations of course on our part during the next few minutes brought us, at about half-past four, on a rather divergent course from that of the enemy, but we were again steaming in the same direction. About this time we were hit frequently.

From a quarter to five onwards the *Gneisenau* had a very bad time of it indeed, although she kept on firing with remarkable rapidity and precision; so, shortly before five o'clock, we increased to full speed, and by a series of small turns to

port maintained a position on her bow and well ahead of her.

The range for the last half-hour had been anything from 12,000 to 10,000 yards, and the *Gneisenau* was in consequence receiving very heavy punishment from our 12-inch; but still, even though at 5.8 P.M. her fore funnel was sent over the side, and it was apparent that the end was near, at 5.15 P.M. she hit us.

But by half-past five she could do no more; blazing furiously, she turned towards us till she was practically end on, and stopped with a heavy list to starboard. With the *Inflexible* and *Carnarvon*, the latter of which had caught up and taken part in the last phase of the action, we closed with her. Even then, in the sorry plight in which she found herself, she kept spasmodically firing a gun here and there; but at six o'clock she suddenly heeled over, and men could be plainly seen walking on her side as she lay for two minutes on her beam-ends. Then she disappeared beneath the waves, leaving over the spot a heavy pall of smoke and steam.

So, at two minutes past six, the action ended.

All three ships hurried to the spot, stopped, and lowered all boats that were not shot away in the midst of about two hundred men struggling in the water, some swimming, others hanging on

to pieces of wreckage or hammocks that had floated out of the ship as she went down.

It was a ghastly sight, and over the scenes of rescue it seems best to draw a veil. Suffice it to say that either by boats or ropes'-ends lowered over the ship's side, we picked up 108 officers and men, some of whom were more or less seriously wounded. But the chill antarctic current—the water was colder than the North Sea average in winter—claimed its victims, and many went down before they could be reached, and not all that were picked up recovered from the exposure on the top of severe shock. But every one worked with a will, even though to the uninitiated it might have seemed peculiar to hear a fast-drowning man—to whom a rope's-end had just been thrown—admonished in this fashion: "'Ere, Sossige, put this round your bloomin' guts!"

Altogether the three ships rescued about 170 men, and at 7.30 P.M., as all survivors were picked up, we proceeded in accordance with the Commander-in-Chief's orders.

III.

Eight P.M. the same evening. A motley crowd of officers, still clad in divers rigs, is assembled in the flat forward of the Ward-room (the mess,

alas, is no more)—some with a generous sprinkling of coal-dust still enveloping them—some blackened and singed with the smoke and heat of the cordite—all shouting as a necessary antidote to their temporary gun-deafness; all bedraggled, dog-tired, and dirty, but superlatively cheery and busily engaged in wolfing corned beef and beer—about the only two things saved from the wreck of the mess and storeroom. A real primitive meal—a fistful of corned beef and beer direct from the bottle. Glorious!

Of course we have all of us just had a run round the ship to see the damage caused by our twenty-three or so hits, and though extensive, surprisingly unimportant (comparativly speaking) this is. To see the decks torn up, gaping holes in the bulwarks, and steel girders and stanchions hanging in bights and ribbons, certainly looks very terrible and awe-inspiring; but, after all, it often does not *vitally* matter.

Amusing sights are many. One shell had burst inside the Ward-room, riddling the bulkhead (where it did not forcibly remove it altogether) with fragments and absolutely wrecking everything. The tables are mere splinters of wood and sawdust, while all that can be seen of the chairs and sofas are wisps of horsehair which have been blown into all sorts of nooks and

crannies; a piano—invested in while at Devonport—seems to have come off best of all, but even then it presents a sorry appearance with the whole of the front torn away and at least half the wires and hammers smashed; firmly imbedded in what is left of the keyboard, too, is a fork, a relic of the hasty meal before we opened fire.

On a part of the main-deck one might imagine for a second that a philanthropist has been at work, for there, strewn about, are a thousand odd golden sovereigns. A shell had come through the upper deck, and, visiting the Pay's cabin, "upset" the money-chest. It had then gone through the bulkhead into the Padre's cabin next door, and finally passed out through the ship's side, taking with it a large part of the reverend gentleman's wardrobe, and reducing to rags and tatters most of what it had the decency to leave behind.

Another shell is found intact in a mess storeroom; steel decks were nothing to it, but a nice "live" gorgonzola cheese (evidently one of those which had caught Wilson's eye—or nose—the evening we left home) was an easy victor. Not that there can have been any really bad feeling, for both "proj" and cheese are found most amicably ranged side by side.

. . . . . .

Now for two small vignettes of the day's happenings.

The most astonishing thing about naval warfare between armoured ships is the extraordinarily small percentage of the ship's company who actually *see* anything of the fighting. Take the Fleet Paymaster and Saxon, who were coding in company with the Admiral's wireless expert. They relied on Sandall (whose station was decks above them, but with whom conversation could be maintained through an armoured escape) for all their news as to the progress of affairs.

It was at the beginning of the day that Saxon had shouted up, "Torps, we'll make you special correspondent for the magazine, and tell us how things are going on now and then."

So at intervals one could have heard the following:—

From below. "How are things now?"

From above. "Oh, not so dusty. We're hitting all right.

From below. "So are they, if all those 'waggles' we are doing mean anything!"

From above. "A mere 'tellabag,' my son."

. . . . . .

"*W-oo-m-p-h.*" *Then a huge explosion exactly between the two parties; in fact, for one second,*

hell let loóse. Those above gradually recover their dazed consciousness; those below, feeling as if their heads had been lifted from their bodies, splutter, cough, and choke as the noxious high explosive fumes permeate through their compartment. A minute passes.

From above (*somewhat anxiously*). "All right, below?"

From below (*rather wheezily*). "Yes; what about you?"

From above. "We're all right. Some proj!"

From below. "What's the latest?"

From above. "Same as ever, except that they're still all standing and we're having a thin time of it at present." (*One minute later*). "*Scharnhorst* sinking."

From below. "Good. I say, Torps, got any cigarettes up there? We've run out." (*A shower of them rains down the escape.*)

. . . . . .

From below. "What's the range now?"

From above. "Oh, about half an hour or so."

From below (*testily*). "No, what's the range?"

From above. "One pound, nineteen shillings and elevenpence, papa." (*Grunts from below.*) "Well, about twelve thousand. But we are rather busy now; there may be a chance for a 'mouldy' shortly."

SCENE.—*A mess "forrard"; every one engaged in filling the inner man.*

First "matloe." "Well, Bill, this blinkin' battle 'as done me a good turn, anyway."

Bill. "Wot d'yer mean?"

First "matloe." "You know as I lost me 'ammick a couple o' days ago—not as I'm in the rattle *yet.* Well, when they lowered the boats this evenin', I—bein' on the spot—'appens to find meself in the first cutter. Off we pulls into the midst o' the 'Uns, and afore we really got into wot you might call the thick of it, up looms a 'ammick with a 'Un 'anging on. So now, you see, I've got a 'ammick—beddin' an' all, even if it 'as belonged to a Sossige."

Bill. "But wot abart the 'Un?"

First "matloe." "'Im? Oh yes, I forgot. Some one picked 'im up orl right."

. . . . . .

Our next thought is as to how the *Kent*, *Cornwall*, and *Glasgow* have fared; but as no news from any of them has come through as yet, we have to possess our souls in patience for a space. But we have not very long to wait for the first tidings, for soon we receive the report of the *Leipzig's* destruction by the *Cornwall* and *Glasgow;* the *Kent*, we know, has been after the *Nürnberg;* so out of the German

squadron there is left solely the *Dresden*, about which we know nothing, and as she was the speediest vessel of the five, it seems that she had managed to escape.

As time goes on and we hear nothing from the *Kent*, we begin to wonder if all is well with her. But optimism is rampant to-night. "She's all right," we say; "wireless gone over the side, probably."

When "pipe down" sounds, although her fate is still unknown, every one puts his head on his pillow (or what remains of it) with a feeling of "something attempted, something done . . ."

IV.

Next forenoon we get news of the *Kent;* the very best of news. She is back in harbour, having sunk the *Nürnberg* after a thrilling chase. As we so cheerfully surmised last night, her wireless had been shot away during the action, and she had consequently lost all means of communication.

Thus yesterday's work has resulted in the sinking of the *Scharnhorst*, *Gneisenau*, *Leipzig*, and *Nürnberg*, while our own squadron has no ship really even seriously damaged; casualties,

too, are surprisingly few—we ourselves, out of our huge complement, having none!

Two more days we stay at sea, trying to track down the elusive *Dresden*. During this time we once go due south of the Horn, but to the dismay of all who have not previously rounded the Cape, the old sea-dogs adjudge that we cannot claim the privileges to which those who have "been round the Horn" are entitled. The whole thing is a bit of old service sea-lore, wherein it is decreed that for either of the two Capes (the Horn or Cape of Good Hope) rounded, one is allowed to put a leg on the table—both legs for the two.

Eventually the coal question forces us to return to harbour, and this morning—the third day after the battle—sees us at anchor again off Port William, there to remain for a time, carrying out temporary repairs and generally making ourselves as ship-shape and seaworthy as possible.

Hæc olim meminisse juvabit.

CHAPTER VI.

"MALVINAS."

"MANY of the islands are occupied only by myriads of penguins, whence the title King of the Penguins sometimes bestowed on the governor of the Falklands." Thus an encyclopædia with which a beneficent Admiralty provides us in what is called the Officers' Library. So it only stands to reason that during the time we perforce have to remain at anchor refitting, all who can take the opportunity of going ashore on various voyages of exploration. Some of us prospected just round and about Stanley the day we arrived, but now there is a chance to get further afield.

What strikes us most of all is the astonishing resemblance in general appearance and characteristics which the Islands bear to another group so many thousands of miles away—the

Orkneys—and when one hears little but broad Scotch the resemblance is doubly intensified.

Altogether in the group there are over one hundred islands, but the two known as East Falkland and West Falkland (Port Stanley, the capital, is in East Falkland) are the only ones of size. Unluckily the climate, though healthy, cannot by any means be described as ideal, for on a yearly average it rains two days out of every three. But during our stay the exception lives up to its well-worn reputation, and on the whole we are having delightful weather; of course, too, we are here at the very best time of the year—midsummer. The antarctic currents, with their attendant chilly bleakness, make one realise how much the dear old United Kingdom owes to the Gulf-stream; here even in the summer the temperature is never very high, and though in sheltered spots the sun strikes as hot as in the South of England, yet out of the sun it always feels cool. The average temperature for winter is about 39° F., and the mean difference between summer and winter is but 12° F. Sheep-farming is the great industry, and the revenue of the colony is made from the export of wool and frozen mutton.

The visit of so many ships to such a small community (Stanley's population is about 700)

taxes in many ways the local resources. Saxon creates almost an *impasse* by being the sixth person in one afternoon to ask for a complete set of stamps at the General Post Office. "I'm very sorry," is the postmistress's reply, "but I shall have to shut up for a minute or two while I get a further supply from the Treasury." Then one begins to realise how self-contained the colony is, with its own War Office, Treasury, &c.

The islands and the water round them abound in creatures of great interest, the most notable being the penguins aforesaid, sea-lions, kelp geese, shags, antarctic skuas, and various species of duck. And of all the quaint animals surely the penguin comes first; anyway he is our favourite.[1] Standing just under two and a half feet high, with short stumpy legs which give him a waddling walk, possessed of "flippers" instead of wings, his diminutive head capping a plump body, and conspicuous with his blue-black shoulders and gleaming white front, he presents an appearance which an antarctic explorer (although he was then speaking of the Adélie and not the Gentoo, with which we are concerned) described as "irresistibly attractive and comical."

Two species of the penguin family are to be

[1] Acknowledgments are tendered to Dr Levick, in case his 'Antarctic Penguins' has unconsciously influenced this description.

found in the Falklands, the Gentoo and the Jackass; and several rookeries of the former variety being close to our anchorage, various visits are made to them, and the number of plates and films exposed by the camera owners is legion. Dannatt easily takes first prize for his system of close-range penguin photography. This is the method: Mark down your "prey" and give chase; when exhaustion forces him to cry halt (if you are not by then an "also ran") he is at your mercy for the closest portrait. All he can do is to pant an undignified disapproval. Just one word of warning, though. Keep to windward—not only of the rookeries but of individuals even!

As regards the squadron at the time, the *Inflexible* and *Carnarvon*, with the *Bristol* and *Glasgow*, are after the *Dresden;* the *Kent* and *Cornwall* are with us, patching themselves up with all speed so as to be off to the chase as soon as possible. The *Orama*, too, is at Port William, having safely convoyed the colliers south.

Even now we have some exciting moments; early one morning we get news of the *Dresden*'s reported arrival at Punta Arenas in the Magellan Straits, so we hope that her days are numbered. Then one evening the mythical invasion of the Falklands takes place! All all events, what is

apparently authentic news of a German landing at an out-of-the-way spot is brought post-haste to Stanley, and in view of the reported presence of a transport on the day of the battle, we feel that there may be something in it. Landing parties are got ready, and our marines with a field-gun are on the point of leaving the ship when the rumour is discountenanced, much to Spooner's disgust.

But the present good time flies all too quickly. "Battle cruisers required at home" are the Admiralty orders. Comes the inevitable coaling —a colossal one, this time, of well over 2000 tons—and then, after a rest of eight days, Wednesday, December 16, sees us "ready to proceed."

"Hip . . . Hip . . . Hurrah!" It is the forenoon of our last day at Port William. The *Cornwall*, *Kent*, and *Orama*, off on a quest from which we ourselves are breaking trail, are bidding us God-speed in good old navy fashion. As each ship in turn passes our bows on her way to the open sea, volley after volley of ringing cheers echo across the water. It is a brave sight, with every mast and yard aswarm with cheering, cap-waving humanity, and nothing loth, we pay

back the compliment three times three. Gradually our late consorts gather speed and grow smaller and smaller, finally to merge into the grey-blue horizon. We are alone with the heat of a midsummer day.

Two o'clock sees us off. The *Inflexible*, at present round the Horn, will follow in our wake.

CHAPTER VII.

ROLLING HOME.

THE sense of smell is a peculiar thing. Some people have it so much more keenly than others, and then with some it is inseparably connected with colour; Saxon always describes the "froust" in his cabin after a few days of the battened down life as yellow. And what seaman worthy of the name is there who cannot from afar off smell the land? Now, early this morning, the twenty-sixth day since leaving the Falklands, blown to us by an off-shore wind that unmistakable — albeit indescribable — smell of Spain is mingling with the pure savour of the sea. We know without looking that our goal, Gibraltar, is in sight.

The voyage north has passed even more pleasantly (were that possible) than when we were outward bound. Certainly the spice of excitement has been more or less missing, but still,

there has been quite a lot of incident about the trip which is fast drawing to a close. So, for a space, let us follow in our tracks, confining the narrative to "incidents"; to touch on the every-day routine of our life would be mere repetition.

As before, we had to rely on the wireless for most of our news of the outside world, and one message intercepted so brought home the powers of this wonderful modern invention that it seems to deserve passing mention. It was either the first or second night out from Port William that the Leading Telegraphist of the middle watch could have been seen scribbling down the following: "Port Stanley to Shackleton" ("never 'eard of that station," he observed to himself), then followed a long message of war news, comprising the latest from the front, and mentioning our little show of the 8th. With the VE (signifying "nothing more coming") still tingling in his ears, he opened the door of the silent cabinet, and, addressing a somewhat sleepy messenger, said, "Here you are, 'ong clare" (which, being interpreted, . . . no, it is too apparent), "copies for all the notice-boards." So at breakfast next morning we wondered if Shackleton, conning the message somewhere on the ice barrier, would realise that one of the ships about which he was reading had obtained the latest home news for

themselves by tapping his "lines of communication."

It seemed uncanny almost to think of Shackleton and his band thus getting news of the topsy-turvy outside world. One felt that the kingdom he had set out to conquer was the only one where peace *did* reign supreme—the Peace (and yet so fraught with danger) of the Great Silent White Unknown.

Then the Sunday before Christmas we paid a short visit to Montevideo, arriving off the Uruguayan capital at half-past six in the morning. Soon after nine a steamer came out, bringing in her a nucleus of the British community, and when it was seen that her passengers were allowed on board, others quickly followed.

Every one seemed awfully pleased to see us and to step on British soil, in the form of our quarter-deck, for a space. It was only in conversation with our visitors that we realised the far-reaching effects of our battle, for they frankly said that for a time after the *Good Hope* and *Monmouth* debacle they had hardly dared to show their faces, so strong was the German community and its following; but now everything was altered.

So during the forenoon we played the *rôle* of hosts, showing our guests over the ship, and when they, on their part, took all the officers who could

get away ashore with them. Altogether they were too charming for words, and our only hope after the day was over was that they did realise how much we appreciated all that was done for us. Six o'clock arrived with a feeling of regret, for then we had to return on board, and soon after seven we sailed.

Martin and Saxon had plenty of work—liners, tramps, and sailing-ships all being grist to their mill—and there is no more glorious picture in the whole world than that of one of those (alas, now almost obsolete) white-winged fliers of the ocean speeding along with all sail set. It was a day or two before re-entering the tropics that we stopped and boarded a large French four-masted barque, bound from North Shields to Valparaiso with a cargo of north-country coal. With every stitch of canvas set to the faint breeze, she presented a magnificent sight, and one could well understand that indrawn sigh of admiration which escaped the lips of Sinbad, whose time in "sail," though long since past, had been—and always would be—"the time of his life." On our approach she threw her main-yards aback and hove to; the boarding party, in honour to our Allies, took over any papers we had in the ship, and the latest Uruguayan war telegrams; also some tobacco and cigarettes.

Christmas day saw us once more in the tropics —Sinbad's and Percy's lotus-land of the dog-watch bath—and in spite of the heat we celebrated the occasion to the best of our ability. Every one was very cheery—even at breakfast! Well, almost every one, perhaps, for Wilson's grunt with which he returned Langton's friendly slap on the back and "Merry Christmas!" was not frightfully enthusiastic.

The Padre held an early morning Communion Service, and in the forenoon the usual morning prayer and a second Celebration; then at half-past eleven the Admiral asked the officers to his cabin to drink the ship's health, and sharp as eight bells sounded he headed the procession for the tour of the men's mess decks.

We all trooped out, dived down a hatch, and then the fun began.

This midday lower-deck tour is a time-honoured ceremony. The day is a great one in the "matloe's" peace-time calendar — a day when routine is reduced to the minimum, discipline is relaxed, and everything done to make life as happy, comfortable, and gay as possible. It is also a day on which the "funny party" come into their own, when, headed by their "squeegee band," they parade the ship and give full vent to their drolleries, of which (though perhaps their

audience do) they themselves never tire. And unwritten law decrees that although one may notice that the biggest scallywag in the ship has suddenly blossomed out as an immaculate Chief Petty Officer, one just—passes by on the other side. On Christmas day especially all is not gold that glitters.

As could only be expected, everything was rather tamer than in peace-time, for, first of all, those two indispensable adjuncts to a real Christmassy atmosphere — holly and mistletoe — were missing, and consequently the decorative effects generally produced were conspicuous by their absence; then, again, the various messes had no special dainties or "duff" to offer; perhaps some in the procession inwardly rejoiced in consequence, for it is no mean achievement to pass through thirty or more messes, sample the bill of fare in each (which *must* be done), and then eat your own Christmas dinner; the lining of one's cap gets so sticky, too, if you take refuge in the only possible alternative—concealing one's gifts therein!

So the procession made its rounds, and suddenly, from far ahead in the line of march, came the sound of miniature firing—one . . . two . . . three . . ., and as the Admiral arrived on the scene of action, so boomed the last round of the fifteen-gun

salute—fired from a home-made cannon, too. Up bobbed a cheery red face with "A Merry Christmas, sir!" 'Twas a pleasing touch, but there were pleasing touches everywhere one visited.

In the Ward-room, later on, with turkeys and plum-puddings that had been kept in the refrigerating room since leaving home, and with crackers unearthed from somewhere, things went with a swing and hilarity that no one could have called forced.

We had a typical "naval bank holiday" on Boxing day—coaling ship. A boat was sent ashore in the afternoon, and a few people who managed to be spared went off on a voyage of exploration. So the "idlers" landed, and, from subsequent accounts, spent a thoroughly enjoyable afternoon in doing the thousand and one foolish, yes, childish things that men, when quite by themselves, and when they feel able to shake off momentarily that fear of "being laughed at," do, and delight in doing.

At least it is presumed that a distinctly portly gentleman (we will not mention names) did enjoy himself in climbing (or trying to) cocoa palm-trees. True, also, there was only the expression on the face of the gnome-like snotty to show that, anyway, he was not *very* bored in chasing lizards, or in abstracting from the nests of fierce wild-fowl

eggs which, with unfailing regularity, were placed in his tunic-pocket one moment and smashed therein the next.

Everything in spite of the heat, too!

The next item of interest was a visit to Pernambuco. Although our stay was a brief one—little more than four hours—some officers went on a prospecting trip ashore, and certainly one of the most pleasing sights was that of twelve German merchant ships laid up in the inner harbour, to all appearances voluntarily interned. (What a beautiful forenoon "hate" their crews had as we passed close by!) When, among the twelve, could be recognised such well-known liners as the *Blucher* and *Cap Vilano*, one felt that the expression "command of the sea" was by no means an empty one.

Our visit was totally unexpected, and its very unexpectedness was the cause of a pretty and pleasing incident as we were getting ready to leave. Those who had been ashore had told us that all the British inhabitants were loud in their dismay at not having had previous warning of our visit, so that they could have done something to welcome us; and now, coming out from the harbour mouth, could be seen a tug with a large boat in tow, from whose stern gaily floated a huge red ensign. The boat contained several of the British

community, who, determined to do *something*, had hurriedly chartered the tug and come to wish us God-speed. Cheer after cheer volleyed across the water, and then, as the first swirl astern showed that we were off, every throat in the boat struck up "God Save our Gracious King." It was most awfully . . . well, what can one call it? . . . "Sporting" perhaps describes it as well as anything. Yes, "sporting" seems peculiarly appropriate, for although it does not so much as hint at any of the motives that impelled those Englishmen — and Englishwomen too — to do what they did, yet it is a word the meaning of which no Boche understands, or apparently can ever act up to.

On New Year's Eve we recrossed the Line, and fateful 1914 with its dying gasp gave us one final throb of excitement, for that morning we encountered what promised to be somewhat of a mystery ship. In the darkness before dawn we ran across a vessel proceeding south with no lights, and whose behaviour, directly she sighted us, was decidedly suspicious. Naturally we closed to investigate, whereat she picked up her skirts and ran. A blank from a 4-inch having no effect, the mystery deepened; but her futile attempt to outspeed us was quickly—almost shamefacedly, we imagined —abandoned. She turned out to be nothing more

warlike than one of a British line running between New York and the Argentine who had mistaken us for Germans! From the passengers who, bleary-eyed and in various states of deshabille, welcomed Martin and Saxon on board, we received a large bundle of magazines and American daily papers. And the Yanks do know how to make the most of things; from their papers it might be *their* war. The head-lines! the news! the account in one rag of how we sank the German battle-cruiser *Von der Tann* off the mouth of the river Plate, we enjoyed immensely; it was so amusing thus to get the first news of a battle in which you were the chief actor. But when in the issue of a few days later we saw that the miserable *Karlsruhe* had sent us to the bottom in a hand-to-hand encounter, well . . .?

A gorgeous day sounded the death-knell of 1914. Through a glassy sea we ploughed our way northward, the pitiless sun overhead, the blue horizon all around, trailing astern the milky foam and froth of our wash. Nothing else in sight; just ourselves, sailing through that mysterious, windless tropic calm—now in the blaze and glare of noon, now in the elusive twilight, now through the star-spattered darkness.

With the striking of sixteen bells at midnight is the Navy's way of ringing out the old and ushering

in the New Year. The youngest officer in the ship must do the deed, and a very able performer our gnome-like bird-nesting hero was. As the last ding-dong died away, the eerie silence of the heat-charged night made itself doubly felt. Our hilarity seemed out of place; of a sudden every one became unnaturally grave; on the lips of all hovered an unasked question.

"I've never seen a Jaguar,
Nor yet an Armadill—
O dilloing in his armour,
And I s'pose I never will,
Unless I go to Rio
These wonders to behold—
Roll down—roll down to Rio—
Roll really down to Rio!
Oh, I'd love to roll to Rio
Some day before I'm old!"

So wrote Kipling. And our only regret on leaving the southern hemisphere is that, for each one of us, these words still hold true. We have not rolled to Rio (as we hoped), but we have always this consolation—we are not dead yet!

II.

Have you ever tried port-and-water? No, this is not a "have," nor is the writer's brain giving way under the strain of the war; it is a sober-

minded question. Because port-and-water is Langton's speciality in hot-weather drinks. So to explain.

It was midnight. Simultaneously with the eight bells came the "action" bugle. Feverishly we all turned out and, dressed in an absolute minimum of clothing (it was a sweltering night, which aided matters), rushed to our stations. "What is it?" every one was mentally asking: "German battle cruisers sent out after us?" "The *Karlsruhe?*" Actually it turned out to be nothing—merely sighting a suspect ship transformed by the darkness into the living image of a man-of-war, but which closer inspection revealed as being nothing more than one of the myriad "such as pass on the seas upon their lawful occasions."

In due course we dispersed, and quickly the hive regained its usual nocturnal calm: except in the Ward-room, whither a certain quartette, parched of mouth, had retired to try their luck in searching, without summoning the steward, for something more interesting to drink than tepid water. They were not very successful. Dannatt, out of one apparent dead man among its fellow-bottles on the sideboard, managed to coax half a glass of muddy beer (and it must have been "super-muddy" to have escaped the duty

servant's attention), while Langton, the only other member of the party who drew anything but a blank, from another bottle produced nearly a whole glass of port. Not much wherewith to slake a thirst which, under more ideal conditions, the owner would not have lightly sold. It is in situations such as these that a man shows of what he is made; and nobly Langton rose to it. As (with apologies to a certain school of American fiction writers) the passion of indecision battered at his will-power to wreck and undo it, deafening, imperative, wave on wave, so the crisis passed; with head averted, eyes two pools of conquered despair—the potion was concocted. He averred that he liked it. The others were sceptical.

"Torps" and Saxon, piqued at their lack of success, proceeded to storm the pantry—a desperate undertaking this, for mess pantries are spots to avoid if one wishes to preserve a good appetite for one's meals. No one ever unnecessarily visits their precincts, except the mess committee. And they do not! Gun-room days and the never-to-be-forgotten sight of a Maltese steward asleep with head ensconced in the curve of a half-consumed ham are responsible.

Here at last fortune seemed to smile with a find of half a pot of coffee, now cold—tepid rather, and condensed milk; quickly our quartette con-

sumed enough of the black poisonous draught to keep the ordinary mortal awake for the rest of his life. Then Saxon unearthed a tin which in the opinion of all, unlabelled though it was, could contain nothing but preserved fruits. Glorious sight! In a moment, top gashed open, its contents were revealed. They were—spinach!

"Bilked," said Langton.

"Torps's" ejaculation was rather more expressive.

"And so to bed," resignedly murmured Saxon, "wellnigh . . ."

St Vincent Harbour looked much the same as when we passed through in November; the same German merchant ships were swinging round their anchors in the same old billets. The same Sebastian, apparently still "with stomach-ache, complete, 1 No.," welcomed us on our arrival.

But everything that happened during those first few hours of our stay was eclipsed by the receipt of the most welcome present possible—a mail. Up the gangway surged an endless stream of the welcome bags; then came the tantalising pause while the sorters (the ship's police) got under way, and then, in driblets, as bag after bag was finished and cast on one side empty, the letters arrived in the mess.

Some one on an occasion such as this invariably takes on the position of distributor-in-chief, and, once firmly established, no one seems to question his authority.

"Here we are," shouted Saxon, who was occupying the post of honour, "roll, bowl, or pitch—you pays your money and you takes your choice," and the duty servant handed him a pile of letters —the first of a welcome flood.

"Martin," he shouted, and eagerly its owner grabbed the missive.

"Dannatt."

"Torps,"—"she loves you after all; no, she doesn't, it's a dun!"

"Guns,"—"Pilot,"—"Wilson,"—"here, when am I going to get one myself?" he interposed. "Langton," — "Commander," — "Padre," "the P.... Fleet Paymaster," he corrected, paying the official due to his own particular boss.

So it went on, the stream of letters, papers, and parcels seemingly endless.

When *you* pen the last words of that meagre address—c/o G.P.O.—do you ever picture a scene like this? Can *you* even imagine the feelings of any one who out of that galaxy of letters drew a blank?

III.

We left St Vincent without the foggiest idea as to our destination. Home, we hoped, with visions of leave in our minds' eyes; Gib. we expected. And Gib. it was, as the wireless told us.

So steadily we set our course northwards, passing the Canaries silhouetted against a golden and rose dawn, then into the colder weather, when we doffed our whites, and in one fell swoop said good-bye to the gorgeous, though strenuous and exciting, times we had passed through down south. And with the thought that they were passed and finished, there came back a whiff of the dull, grey, cold North Sea.

As we said, the Rock is in sight. At half-past nine we pass through the breakwater, and after a triumphal procession up harbour through an avalanche of cheers, to which a cruiser of our French Allies added a formidable share, secure alongside the South Mole, with the war-worn victorious *Carmania* astern.

Evening sees us in dock. To enjoy for a space a well-merited rest, one may say. Ye-e-e-s. But

with docking begins that noisy nerve-racking pandemonium so inseparably connected with refitting.

For five weeks it lasts—five weeks with only one sad moment among them, when we bid farewell to the Admiral and his staff, when the Vice-Admiral's flag is slowly hauled down, no more to flutter so proudly and victoriously from our fore. Day by day the good old ship regains her strength, and now, wounds healed and convalescence over, once more she is ready for the fray, with nought to show of her battering but a few honourable scars. We, her inmates, have made the most of our time: shore-leave for as many as possible of the men every day; for the officers — week-ends over the water at the "Reina Christina," golf at Campamento, rugger on the North Front, . . . civilisation; but it is not home.

Then one afternoon in February, almost five weeks since our arrival, we sail for—once more that is a query. The Dardanelles, a certain school of opinion, with Dannatt as its leader, says, but most of us favour the North Sea. As we gather speed in Gibraltar's Bay—a few minutes more and the ship's head alone must show what the powers that be have been keeping secret—comes

the pipe, "We are proceeding to . . .," well, it cannot be written, but it is "somewhere in the North Sea."

"Farewell and adieu to you, fair Spanish ladies,
Farewell and adieu to you, ladies of Spain."

Part III. The North Sea.

CHAPTER I.

"CARRYING-ON."

THE first thing we notice on picking up the routine amid "those Northern mists" is the marked change which has come over the sea affair. When we sailed on our mission over three months ago the whole of the fleet seemed to be practically ceaselessly at sea; by now, however, though its main object—the annihilation of the German Navy—has not been achieved, yet its secondary aim is *un fait accompli*, for already the German mercantile flag has to all intents and purposes been swept from the seas. So the fleet, for reasons of strategy, has entered upon an unwelcomed period of comparative inactivity, unwillingly spending a far greater

amount of time in harbour than has been its wont. And from friends in other ships we gather that life, though perhaps not so strenuous, certainly is more trying—watching and waiting . . . How long . . . ? Not that things have become "stale"; the *Lion* and her consorts had proved that on the Dogger Bank.

But waiting—in a world of one's own, leading a strange existence far from the public ken (thank goodness for this, though), away from everything that counts for life and civilisation—is apt to become, even if not actually monotonous, depressing. The sight—if at sea, of the boundless ocean; if in harbour, of a bleak coast and a barren, treeless, perhaps snow-swept countryside—tends to make one become just a Thing, unappreciative of aught save the needs of the service and of one's personal animal wants. For (perhaps some people will not believe it) there are men in the service whose souls at times cry out for the beautiful things of life on shore, whether these be the ring of a frost-bound countryside with every twig and blade of grass a-shimmer with silver, the primrose-perfumed woodlands of spring, the ceaseless race of the shadows across some Devonshire moor under a willow-pattern sky, the May song of a nightingale welling out from the dusk, the dart of the

kingfisher up some babbling meadowside brook, the crimson glare of a field of waving poppies in the foreground of a sunset sky, or even the kaleidoscopic whirl of London's traffic at the height of the day.

"Just look at that sunset," Saxon had said the other day, pointing westward over án un-inviting arm of land, "spoilt for want of tree."

So we find that much has been done to enliven the off-time in harbour. A golf course, laid out by the players themselves, provides healthy exercise for the officers; there are footer grounds for the men, and then for the long dark evenings concerts and "the movies" help to while away the time.

We are back at our old base after a pleasant stay in the company of the battle fleet, quite settled into the old routine, and with our trip "down South" relegated to the background as just a pleasant memory. The time passes; gradually we watch spring gain the upper hand, and then with a rush comes the inevitable set-back when we are plunged again into mid-winter with its snow and sleet and biting winds. The time is fairly evenly divided—a trip to sea, now for practice mainly, now on a Hun chase which, alas, never seems to mature. The only annoying

thing about the sea time is to find when reading the papers on our return to harbour that "Captain So-and-so of the Norwegian or Danish or Swedish ship —— reports sighting a mighty German Fleet in the Skager Rack." True, the White Ensign in the distance does resemble the Pirates' flag, but surely the enemy's naval strategy has not been such as to make it a natural conclusion that the fleet which periodically cruises in what are almost German waters must be German? Then, again, we read of some mythical "gigantic naval battle" in a spot where a bare thirty-six hours ago we happened to be. We never realised before how far the sounds of our guns in practice could carry, or perhaps the Norwegian and Danish window-frames are very flimsily made that they rattle so easily!

With spring firmly established comes for us the time of our lives—a short visit to a contractor's yard and a few days' leave, when for a brief space we "return in safety to enjoy the blessings of the land, with the fruits of our labours." When, going, we experience the joy of boarding the train which is to whirl us home; when, returning, we realise the awful, dull, grey, overwhelming depression of a railway station.

Then dawns the day on which we lose every remnant of the fast dwindling respect in which

we held our foe—respect for the individual that is, respect for the fighting machine will never diminish. Lusitania Day: to say more is superfluous.

In fact the sea, sentimentally, is not such a pleasant place as it was earlier on: so often one runs across pathetic evidence of brother Boche's puerile and insensate "hate"—insensate because in his childish rage he uses no discrimination, but so often sends to the bottom the poor unoffending neutral; sometimes 'tis just the burglar's flotsam, sometimes 'tis proof of murder—the most devilish ever conceived. Sometimes one wonders, in pity more than anger, what are we fighting—human beings or animals? Then one just shrugs one's shoulders and murmurs "square-heads." That word is so expressive.

And so the months pass by. Once more "the powers that be" have decreed that we are to be a flagship, and early summer sees a Rear-Admiral's flag flying from our fore.

CHAPTER II.

"THOSE PEOPLE."

SOMEWHERE we said, referring to the Padre's concert which has so long been in the offing: "Whether—and if it is, when—it will be produced, fate will decide." Well, to-night's the night!

We are in harbour, of course; it could not come off otherwise. The upper deck presents a strange and unusual appearance. By the after superstructure is rigged up the stage, just a rough collection of planks supported by biscuit boxes; the draping, side curtains, &c., are provided by flags; the drop-scene, painted by the Padre himself, keeps us near at home with a picture of the fleet at sea; the back scenery and wing pieces represent, we imagine, a street after the Queen Street, Portsmouth, type, for the *pièce de résistance* is the glittering shop window of "Uncle Motheth, ma tear," while flanking

it on either side are a fish and chips shop with lifelike representation of a "matloe" sampling his favourite dish, and the bar-parlour entrance of "The Rum King." The band and Ward-room piano provide the orchestra. The auditorium, by now seething with humanity, is just the screened-in midship part of the upper deck, seats being improvised from capstan bars resting on buckets, while two 12-inch turrets and the four huge guns themselves provide accommodation for two or three hundred. For the officers the front two rows of the "stalls" have been reserved.

Incongruous it would appear to an outsider, though we notice it not—the two turrets with their black gently-moving "swarms," and the guns with their laughing, joking human freight,—guns which have dealt out death and destruction to the enemy.

All is ready. The band have played their overture, so up goes the curtain and on to the stage steps the Rev. Charles Golightly. "The first item on the programme is a chorus by the Glee party." Up troop the latter, led by a leading stoker of very sombre countenance and recalcitrant hair. With a bow to the audience, which more resembles the peck of a herring at some swift-darting fish than the real article, he lifts

his baton and the party give tongue. Very creditable, too.

Then follows what is described as "just a song." It takes on at once, and the thousand or so lusty throats pick up the chorus—

"Kitty, Kitty, isn't it a pity?"

. . . .

So the programme goes on—recitations, sword swinging, songs, comic and sentimental, a turn by the ship's conjurer, while the last item is a comedy in one act with three performers. But before that stage of the whole performance is reached the inevitable of course has happened. The hero—culprit rather—of the episode was Private Spooner; his speciality a song of the George Robey type. That it went down goes without saying, and the Padre's carefully censored encore was a still greater success. Off the stage walked Spooner to an accompaniment of clapping and yells of approval. The Padre seeing him in the wings felt that all was well, so devoted his attention to hurrying on the next turn. So Spooner, still hearing the plaudits—*his* plaudits—from the audience, put into execution a plan which he had devised in case things, as he judged, went well. In another second he was delighting the house with his own uncensored encore. The saving grace of the affair was that,

being war-time, there were no visitors from that outside world wherein *you* live. But the Padre's feelings can best be left to the imagination.

The sketch is a great success, and Miss Dewdrop's acting quite creditable. The white silk stockings and flimsy fluffy gown are most entrancing. But it is bad luck on her (in private life she is one of the marine servants) that the silken casing of her right leg shows a tendency to collect in rucks round her ankle, thus provoking a loud-voiced remark from one of the audience of, "'ere, 'er starboard suspender's gone an' busted,"—in the middle of an impassioned love scene, too, where Sir Antony Beverley (erstwhile Nobby Clark) is asking for her heart and hand.

A shuffling of feet: then silence. With baton outstretched the bandmaster turns and faces the auditorium. Then . . .

"Long to reign over us,
God save the King!"

CHAPTER III.

A FAREWELL *STRAFE*.

SUMMER wanes; come the equinoctial gales, and almost before we realise it back we are once more in the dull and chilly North Sea winter—the second winter of the war. Still waiting . . . and watching. . . .

Back again with the long and tedious evenings; is it to be wondered if one or two here and there have become a bit crusty? But by now we have installed a new diversion, "the movies." Thus we see in the flesh—in the film, rather—for the first time that great British national hero, "C. Chaplin, Esq." We had only read about his exploits before; now we are further honoured.

To digress for a moment. The dear old British public is a wonderful institution; to us in our exile, did we not *know*, we well might wonder whether they really care a hang about this war. But of course they do; the stupendous response

to the War Loan has shown that. And then the papers keep them up to the scratch! But if any one were to ask us, as unbiassed observers, to name the most renowned man of the moment in the public's mind, we should unwillingly plump for "Charlie." Should we be wrong?

1915 is dead; we embark on the New Year with fresh determination and hopes, and still the time goes on with us watching . . . and waiting. . . . Little alters; we merely feel that we get more and more out of touch with the outside world. We read of weird by-elections, for, so it seems to us, the self-glorification of a half-penny paper. It is not nice reading, but we pass it over, more in sorrow than in anger. But is this what we are coming to *at home?*—"Mr Bertie Bandy-Legs returned to Parliament as representative of the acrobatic profession on the strength of having stood on his head for five minutes at Upper Tooting." All right—so long as Mr Bertie B.-L. has never (no, not even as a "temporary officer and gentleman" only) been in any branch of the service.

"I should hate to be put on a par with standard bread," said Langton one morning when the papers arrived.

To us it all might be disconcerting, were it not for the fact that we realise that *this* is the B. P.'s

way of pretending not to notice the war, while each day the inward determination to gain a crushing victory grows stronger and stronger.

Again we read of the war-shy single men and the war-shy married men and that verminous reptile who calls himself an Englishman, but who suddenly finds that he has a conscientious objection to doing harm to his country's enemy; at least that is what he says. But the Immortal William *was* a good judge of character. That there may be *some* conscientious objectors we do not doubt in the least, but what we cannot understand is this—Why should the breed be allowed to inhabit our country? Why should *we* have to sully our honour by the knowledge that when we are fighting for our country we are also fighting for *them?* Is there any rational reason why they should be allowed to retain their British nationality? A 3rd single to Berlin (could such a ticket be bought) would surely be the best thing to give them. At least that is how it strikes us. But of course we are only sailor-men—not lawyers or politicians.

Anyhow, to us, it is rather exasperating. And when one hears the murmured complaints—"Swine—Well I'm hanged—Oh, *strafe* every one!" of Langton, engrossed in the latest paper, one can guess what he is reading.

And here, with a foretaste of spring in the air —the spring of a year which we all confidently feel will bring forth mighty things—the great combined push on land, *Der Tag* at sea (if that is ever to come off), the time has come to bid farewell to our ship's company. They are changing so rapidly; eighteen months must inevitably cause many changes—the penalty of progress and proficiency of youth. Also, no longer can I claim to be one of them, for this morning, along the white path of a picket-boat's wake, I watched OUR ship fade away in the mist and over the horizon of my life.

EPILOGUE.

How would you like to be on leave when, if not *The* day, *A* day comes; when the biggest naval battle of history is fought; to read about it in the papers?

Such is my fate. To one who, like myself, for nineteen months of the war lived the battle-cruiser life, it is easy to picture everything: the encounter, which took place when we were carrying out one of the numerous routine "sweeps," the hopes, the expectations, the cheery optimism, the one thought alone—"if only we can get at them to-day."

And "get at them" they did. For a space the battle cruisers, light cruisers, and destroyers seem to have engaged the entire German Fleet—gaining the necessary hour or two needed by the battleships. Is it possible to imagine anything more glorious, more inspiring, in the annals of our history?

Losses were inevitable; but it was a demoralised enemy—a demoralised navy—which our

battle fleet encountered and pounded before being robbed by mist and darkness of the most overwhelming victory it would have been possible to secure.

And among the losses figure OUR ship and OUR ship's company. One can picture it all so plainly: the Inferno of shot and shell—the explosion—the sheet of flame enveloping everything, and rising, seemingly, to the sky . . . the end.

Sic itur ad astra.

THE END.

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A naval digression.